

Subjectivity and Selfhood in Kant, Fichte and Heidegger

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Abstract

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Kant once said that the “whole field of philosophy” is guided by the fundamental question, “What is the human being?” Kant himself, and even more so his Idealist successors, addressed this question by offering transcendental theories of human *subjectivity*. This dissertation explores the philosophical development of the Kantian and post-Kantian theories of subjectivity and their relationship to the often neglected theory of *selfhood* in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. After examining the issues in Kant’s theory which were decisive motivating factors for the post-Kantian Idealists—namely the metaphysical status of the apperceptive I and the unity of reason—I explore Fichte’s metaphysics of subjectivity and his attempt to demonstrate the unity and self-sufficiency of reason. Finally, I argue that the early Heidegger’s theory of finite human existence is best understood as an extension of and corrective to the classical Idealist tradition. I attempt to cash out two of Heidegger’s claims: (1) that his own “fundamental ontology” is pre-figured by Kant’s theory of subjectivity, and (2) that the crucial insights in his reading of Kant share much with the Idealists but also “move in the opposite direction” from them. I argue that Heidegger’s theory of selfhood gives an account of the *sui generis* features of human existence which unifies our theoretical and practical activities while avoiding the stronger Idealist claims regarding the self-sufficiency and self-legitimacy of reason.

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“What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”

Psalm 8:4

“There are many strange and wonderful things,
but nothing more strangely wonderful than man.”

Sophocles, *Antigone*

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Abbreviations for Commonly Cited Texts

KANT

Citations to the first *Critique*, as is customary, refer to the pagination of the first edition of 1781 (A) and/or the second edition of 1787 (B). All other citations refer to the volume and pagination of the *Akademie* edition (GS below). English quotations are generally from the following translations, though I note where I have altered the translation.

- KRV *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997.
- KPV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996.
- KU *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.
- GMS *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996.
- GS *Gesammelte Schriften (Akademie-Ausgabe)*, 29 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966.

FICHTE

All citations are to the following English translations, followed by a reference to SW (except in the case of citations to SK, which are followed by references to GA). All amendments to the English translations will be noted.

- FEPW *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*. Ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988.
- IWL *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*. Ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.
- SK *The Science of Knowing: J.G. Fichte's 1804 Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre*. Trans. Walter E. Wright. Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2005.
- SE *The System of Ethics*. Ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale and Günter Zöller. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005.
- SW *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämtliche Werke*, 8 vols. Ed. I.H. Fichte. Berlin: Veit and Co., 1845.
- GA *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 15 vols. Ed. Reinhard Lauch et al. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1964-.

HEIDEGGER

All citations will be to the following editions. English quotations are generally from the following translations, though I note where I have altered the translation.

- SZ *Sein und Zeit*, 19th edition. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1962.
- KPM *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 6th edition. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998. Trans. Richard Taft. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th edition, enlarged. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997.
- GP *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975. Trans. Alfred Hofstadter. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, rev. edition. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1988.
- PIK *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1997.
- VWG "Vom Wesen des Grundes". In *Wegmarken*. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976. Trans. William McNeill. "On the Essence of Ground". In *Pathmarks*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998.

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For my wife, Sara

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Introduction

Kant once said that the main question and ultimate concern of the “whole field of philosophy” is “what is the human being?”, and that all of philosophy’s other fundamental concerns—theoretical and practical, epistemological, metaphysical and moral—must ultimately relate to this central question. Indeed, from Plato’s attempts to understand the Delphic oracular imperative to “know thyself” to contemporary discussions about the nature of consciousness, philosophy has often been preoccupied with the question of human distinctiveness and the place of humankind within nature. In asking this question, and in locating it at the center of philosophy as he did, Kant initiated a certain tradition—what we now call classical German philosophy—which provided a certain framework which served as a guide for answering it. Kant described his critical philosophy as an attempt to foment a “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy whose goal was a new way of thinking about metaphysical issues which would put metaphysics on “the secure path of a science”, and he called this alternate way of doing things “transcendental philosophy”. His immediate sympathetic successors united under this banner, and insofar as these transcendental sansculottes took themselves to be guided by Kant’s main question, they developed what we can call *transcendental* theories of subjectivity.

Now, “subjectivity” might be seen as one of those hopelessly vague and ambiguous philosophical terms of art, usually surrounded by an air of gravitas and profundity which perhaps can naturally cause suspicion; and indeed the term can and has been used in any number of ways to mean a plethora of different things. I’d like then at the outset to

anchor my usage of the term in the following way: by “subjectivity” I mean to point to or pick out in a preliminary way that characteristic or set of characteristics by which we can initially recognize both ourselves and others *as human beings*.¹ To be a human being, or to choose a more Heideggerian locution here, to be the “being each of us is”, is to “have” or “possess” subjectivity, to see this feature as characteristic of the type of existing beings we are.

We can likewise describe this feature, again preliminarily, as the feature in virtue of which we “have a view on things”, or in which “things *are there for us*”, or in which things are “at issue” for us. If we see philosophy as, in Wilfrid Sellars’ apt slogan, the attempt “to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term”², then the term subjectivity is meant to pick out those beings *for whom* things can hang together. “Having a view” now is to be taken in a similarly broad sense, not limited to the ocular, but rather in the sense of being capable of *assuming a stance*, all the way from feeling things to be a certain way to judging them to be so, from feeling at odds with and confined by the circumstances which that view reveals or feeling in control of them. Nor is “having a view” limited to the spectatorial, to being aware or simply watching what is happening “inside” or “out there” in the world, but one’s actions are or can be just as, perhaps more so, constitutive and revelatory of one’s view on things, of one’s stance. To see one of philosophy’s main goals as the attempt to understand what the human being is, and thus to understand what

¹ I want to be clear here that I do not mean to *identify* “beings with subjectivity” with “human beings”, but rather to *anchor* the former term at least initially in the latter. This will be more explicit in a moment. And when I say “human being” here I mean to use the term in a quite ordinary sense, referring to you and me and others like us, rather than in any particular technical-philosophical—for example Kantian—sense.

² “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man”, included in the collection *In the Space of Reasons: Selected Essays of Wilfrid Sellars*, ed. Sharp and Brandom. Harvard, 2007. p. 369.

subjectivity consists in, is to say that if we conceive of philosophy as Sellars does, philosophy then is interested not just in understanding how things—in a narrower sense, as those things which are not us, but nevertheless there, in view—do in fact hang together for us, but at the most general level, philosophy is fundamentally interested in understanding what *we* must be like, or how we must conceive *of ourselves*, such that things *can* come to hang together for us in the ways that they do. “Subjectivity” then must be one of those “things” in the broadest sense of the term which must be hanging together with everything else. But then beings with subjectivity immediately assume a peculiar kind of position, being both there hanging together with things and, seemingly uniquely, *the beings for whom* things are hanging together in the first place.

To insist that philosophy must include, indeed be in some sense fundamentally concerned with, a theory of subjectivity, is to insist that *we*, that is, the beings picturing things hanging together, must be “in the picture” that philosophy gives us too, hanging together with things such that it is not lost on us that at the same time “the hanging together” is something that *we* are noticing or attending to or concerned with. *We*—philosophers, human beings—are the ones asking about how things hang together; and the *picturing* of things hanging together in a certain way must be part of the picture that philosophy gives us. These two tasks—understanding how things in fact hang together and understanding what subjectivity is such that the hanging together of things is a fundamental concern here—should be seen as inseparable and inextricable from one another. A theory of subjectivity needs a theory, or at least an account, of what is not subjectivity and how those other things relate to subjectivity and vice versa. This is to say that a theory of subjectivity can’t be formed in a vacuum, and that to answer the

question about what the human being is to ask at the same time *what humankind's place is* in our conception of things as a whole. But, again, to insist on this question as fundamental is to say that if the picture does not somehow include the picturing, then we don't yet have the whole picture.

The contrast term to subjectivity will not really then be "objectivity". As I am conceiving of subjectivity, objectivity can be seen as a special feature of subjectivity; it is a term—indeed an honorific one—we can apply to the *views* on things which themselves essentially belong to beings to whom we ascribe subjectivity. It is an aspirational notion, something to which the essential doings of beings with subjectivity can, and perhaps often should, be aiming. The views on things beings with subjectivity have, including their pictures of the hanging together of things in general, can—and often, but not always, should—be measured and evaluated by how far they manage to remove what is purely idiosyncratic or parochial in those views, that is, how far they manage to not be dependent on what is "merely subjective". In many, but again not all, of its doings, beings with subjectivity can and should strive for objectivity, and, I think, and want to say unproblematically so, actually sometimes achieve it. Objectivity is a potential feature of the views on things in which subjectivity essentially consists; it is a question of the accuracy of the picture of the hanging together of things it arrives at, of how far the picture "gets it right" about how things fit into the picture and in fact hang together.

The proper contrast term, if we have to name it, would rather be something like "objecthood". The theories of subjectivity which are definitive of the classical German philosophical tradition with which we will be concerned here—and, as we will see, similarly with Heidegger—start from the notion that "beings with subjectivity" are not

then, and should never be conceived of, as “things”, now in the narrower sense of that term, call them “objects”. There is a fundamental doctrine of “categorical difference” or “ontological asymmetry” here. In picking out a class of existing beings “with subjectivity”, beings “without subjectivity”—things, mere objects—are being excluded.³ These two classes of beings—things in the broader sense—then require different conceptions, demand that we picture them differently. The distinction itself might seem tautological at best or inappropriately circular and question-begging at worst, but, again preliminarily, it is meant to have a commonsensical and *prima facie* plausibility. Stones, tables, and cars aren’t capable of themselves—or at least don’t often show up in our picture of things when we are trying to be objective, or get it right about stones, tables and cars, as capable of themselves—having a view on things, on the world being there *for them*. And it is just these latter features which a theory of subjectivity as I’ve described it has decided at the outset to attend to. This idea can be seen as the central plank in the platform that transcendental philosophy, inspired by the Copernican Revolution, insists on: that the bearers of subjectivity, the beings to whom subjectivity can be ascribed as a characteristic feature, however we want to call them—human beings, persons, “absolute I’s”, or *Dasein*—cannot be construed along the same lines as we construe all, or most, other “things”. We can never, or at least shouldn’t ever, come to see ourselves as *just* objects among other objects, like the ones that mostly populate our picture of things.

This way of conceiving of transcendental philosophy immediately seems to put it at odds with what most people call “naturalism”, under most definitions of that term. If

³ The crucial claim is that “beings with subjectivity” and “objects” refer to two different ontological categories; beings with subjectivity (e.g. human beings, persons) are not things (objects) and vice versa. The reason for calling this ontological *asymmetry* will become clearer in due course, and most clear in the case of Heidegger. The idea is that there are asymmetries in the relations of *dependence* between subjectivity and things.

naturalism means roughly the conviction that *only* natural science and its distinctive methodologies can properly tell us what exists and how all things hang together, then the type of transcendental philosophy whose fundamental concern is the theory of subjectivity—let’s call it for symmetry’s sake “transcendentalism”—would insist that “beings with subjectivity” themselves seem to be simply outside the natural sciences’ special area of expertise. Natural science’s special expertise is after all precisely getting it right about how things are with “objects”—all those things that are *there* for beings with subjectivity. The “investigation” into beings with subjectivity would seem to naturally fall under the expertise rather of the “humanities”—philosophy included—and the arts, and perhaps some of the social sciences. Under this conception, art and literature can *prima facie* tell us lots of things about subjectivity, or what it’s like to be, or what’s involved in being, a being with subjectivity, and it would be the special task of philosophy to articulate the *fundamental structures* of this “phenomenon”. This means that transcendentalism insists on the “autonomy” of philosophy (and art and literature), meaning that philosophy is not exactly “continuous” with, though also not for all that in “competition” with, the natural sciences.

None of which however needs to be construed as the last word on the matter. The claim is initially just that the natural sciences *look* unequipped such as they are to explain to us according to their manner of explanation what subjectivity is or essentially consists in, which we have taken to be the central concern. But it might turn out that we—including natural scientists—have underestimated the tools that the natural sciences primarily utilize, or that the natural sciences themselves will evolve or develop new tools which better equip them for the job; but that is a different matter, and then they might

become so different as to be barely recognizable according to the standards that we use to recognize them now. The point however is that transcendentalism, with its central concern for developing a theory of subjectivity, simply takes itself to be offering a different starting point and insisting on different fundamental concerns than does “naturalism”.

One might wonder immediately about animals here. From the transcendentalist view as I am presenting it, the question becomes about how much animals do in fact share with us, which is in principle left as an open question, and one whose answer would itself require special attention to what the biological sciences reveal about them. The initial association of “beings with subjectivity” with *human beings* is meant, as I said, as a preliminary orientation and anchor for use of the term. It is a feature of this way of going about things that however we come to understand it, subjectivity will be a defining characteristic of, at least, we human beings. How far we then come to extend this concept, and thus how inclusive the scope of the theory of subjectivity turns out to be, will depend on other factors, not least the details of the theory itself. Perhaps it will turn out to be the case that certain animals, or all, but not—at least *prima facie* not—stones, tables and cars, must be described according to the theory as “beings with subjectivity”. Or perhaps, as seems plausible, it will turn out to be a matter of degree, a matter of deciding, or finding out, which features are preserved along the spectrum and how far out.

But, in line with Kant’s question, the theories of subjectivity with which we will be concerned here must at least methodologically begin with a focus on human beings. Such a focus requires an emphasis on the special distinctiveness of human subjectivity. And

the focus itself gives an initial shape to the theories themselves. Rousseau—who is often conceded to be an important precursor to Kant and his successors—had described the special distinctiveness which belongs to human beings, intimately tied to the fact that they are beings with subjectivity, as attaching to their “faculty of self-perfection”, to their “perfectibility”.⁴ This means that our conception of what it is to be human can never be exhausted by our understanding simply of what “nature has made of man”, but rather needs to be supplemented by our understanding of what “man has made of himself”. One, and perhaps the most important, motivation behind these theories of subjectivity, and the reason why, from the transcendentalist perspective, the question about “what the human being is” amounts to an anchor to which all other questions of philosophical concern are somehow tethered, will be the desire to come to understand what human beings have made of themselves and what they may still make of themselves, which means a desire to understand what human beings are capable of thinking and doing, what they can, should, and may think and do.

In what follows, I will be concerned with sketching out what is essentially involved in this “transcendentalist” tradition through three representative figures: Kant, Fichte and Heidegger. I will be concerned with what their theories of subjectivity actually are—which is to say how they answer the question about what the human being is—as well as how the tradition to which they each contributed functions as a tradition, that is, how it becomes inherited and modified. As we will see, it is not a straightforward matter to say what Kant himself, who initiated the tradition, had to say on the matter. This is because it can look at times as if his own “main question” is not in fact very often his own most

⁴ “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men”. *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. and transl. by Gourevitch. Cambridge, 1997. p. 141.

direct fundamental concern. He sounded the clarion call of the Copernican Revolution rather because he wanted to put metaphysics on the secure path of a science. He wanted to show, contra Hume, that our conception of nature has an objective validity whose source lies in pure reason, and that the necessary and binding obligations that the moral law places on our wills get their objective validity through the same source. He wanted to show the limits of this pure reason in order to make room for rational faith and rational hope.

Fulfilling these desires in the manner he did required Kant along the way to say lots of things about the nature of subjectivity, that is, for him, about the nature of the “determining”—in contrast to the “determinable”—moments in our own “modes of cognition”, as his own description of the Revolution would have it. One way of beginning to describe how those who inherit Kant’s new tradition—all of whom initially describe themselves as “Kantians”—in fact come to inherit that tradition is to say that they are particularly sensitive to the “metaphysical import” of the clarion call of the revolution vis-à-vis subjectivity itself which Kant himself was not particularly sensitive to. Kant himself was always occupied with what he took to be more pressing concerns than an explicit “theory of subjectivity”. If such a theory is in fact there, it is formed piecemeal and “along the way” and always in the service of other immediate concerns, describable as a “metaphysics of nature” and a “metaphysics of morals”.

But it is just this piecemeal quality that so disconcerted his successors. They believed Kant’s theory of subjectivity did not quite “hang together” in the right way, but were equally convinced that, with a little re-alignment of our sensitivities and consequently of what we took to be our fundamental concerns, all the problems could be easily solved.

Those putative problems for the most part revolve around a perceived lack of “unity” in Kant’s theory of subjectivity, and they were to be solved precisely with a “metaphysics of subjectivity”—a unified theory of subjectivity as such—which directly concerned itself with the metaphysical import of the Copernican Revolution vis-à-vis subjectivity. The charge that Kant’s theory lacked a necessary unity attaches itself to the perception that it is inappropriately dualistic along at least two axes. Firstly, regarding theoretical subjectivity, the theory relies on a distinction, itself unexplained or taken for granted, between two faculties of cognition, sensibility and understanding, which respectively represent the ways in which we are passive and active in cognition, in coming to know what and how the world is and must be like. Secondly, Kant seems to give two accounts of *reason*—a fundamental attribute of how subjectivity essentially functions and goes about its business—which on the surface give us quite different results. This means that it is not obvious how theoretical and practical subjectivity can hang together in a unified way.⁵ In particular, since theoretical reason and practical reason respectively give us conceptions of nature and of freedom, if we apply those conceptions of reason to our picture of subjectivity itself, it is not clear how beings with subjectivity can be both natural and moral beings at the same time, how our understanding of how we come to know things about the natural world and our place within it can coexist and square with our understanding of how we are supposed to be acting within that world. Kant after all himself held out the carrots-on-sticks for those who came after him and were willing to inherit the way of doing things which he initiated. He says those two faculties of

⁵ I am talking now about how the Idealists saw things, not how Kant himself or more strict “Kantians” would describe the matter. As we will see, Kant is well aware of the tension here and he offers solutions to resolve it, indeed in some ways “transcendental idealism” *is* the solution, or is intended to be. But, as I will argue in part one, independently but in sympathy with the Idealists, those answers aren’t particularly satisfying.

cognition might after all have a “common root”, unknown to us (now, or ever?), and that there can after all be only “one and the same reason” which is employed for both theoretical and practical purposes. This “problem of the common root” and this “problem of the unity of reason”, then, will be the central concerns of the discussion of Kant in part one.

Of course, those who initially inherited Kant’s transcendentalist strategy—paradigmatically Fichte, Schelling and Hegel—came to call themselves “Idealists” of one stripe or another. Fichte, particularly as the author of the early versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* prior to say 1800, will stand in here as a representative example of “early Idealism”, representative in the sense that much of what I will say about him and the most apposite claims that I will attribute to him will also be applicable to the others, especially in the early stages of their own development, and largely to the later and more “mature” stages as well, and to Hegel in particular. A fuller treatment of the tradition with which I am concerned would require a direct discussion of him. Nevertheless, I try to make the case in part two that Fichte makes all the claims that are essential to an “idealist” theory of subjectivity which all of the German Idealists share, at least for large swaths of their careers.⁶ I argue that the idealist theories of subjectivity actually make two fundamental claims, which they believe are intimately connected, but which are in principle and in fact separable. The first is a direct consequence of the *transcendentalist* orientation toward subjectivity itself. The metaphysics of subjectivity which they develop insist that we consider beings with subjectivity to be *sui generis*, whose

⁶ I am making a distinction here between the set of terms ‘Idealism’ and ‘Idealist’ on the one hand and ‘idealism’ and ‘idealist’ on the other. The first set of terms will be used to refer to the philosophers themselves, and the second set to the broader philosophical positions to which they are committed, which can have a broader applicability than to these historical figures, though still distinctive, that is, different from, for example, Berkeleyan “idealism”.

distinguishing, ontologically unique feature is characterized by a special kind of *activity*—the spontaneous *self*-activity of “original synthesis” in Kant’s sense. The crucial claim is that this characterization as a unique type of activity means that subjectivity is *self-constituting*. The being of beings with subjectivity is constituted *by* that self-activity, and is then nothing, or at least not itself, without it. The first idealist claim is that we are to understand subjectivity then *as* that very activity, which is spontaneous and thus arises “from out of itself”.

The second claim, or set of claims, relate to the putative, more robust, “idealist” consequences of such a conception of subjectivity, that is, the sense in which and the extent to which the first claim is supposed to imply that things which are there for beings with subjectivity are then *dependent* on subjectivity for their own being. Fichte argues, though as we will see, somewhat ambiguously in the details, that the inherited Kantian problems of the unity of theoretical subjectivity and the unity of subjectivity as a whole—both in the theoretical and practical spheres—can be solved *all at once* as it were once we understand that subjectivity is characterized by spontaneous self-constituting activity. This means that the self-constituting character of subjectivity alone suffices to show us that rational subjectivity is not only unified, i.e. that its respective employments have the same essential structure, but that reason itself, and thus rational subjectivity, is thereby wholly *self-sufficient*, meaning that it is dependent on *nothing outside itself* in order to be what it is and to satisfy all of its rational demands.

The philosophical standpoint of German Idealism has recently enjoyed a renewed interest within Anglophone philosophy, and has garnered a certain respect it has not always received. The focus, however, of this renewed interest is most often centered on

the latter types of claims. Robert Pippin, for instance, attributes the continued significance of Fichte's idealism to its insistence on the "self-sufficiency or autonomy of...the normative domain itself, what Sellars [called] 'the space of reasons'." He argues that Fichte's idealism is essentially a "normative monism" that asserts the "unconditioned status of the space of reasons", but *without*, crucially, arguing for "the metaphysical distinctness of a spontaneous mind".⁷ As Pippin's choice of terminology suggests, this assertion is definitive of the fundamental concerns of the neo-Hegelianism of McDowell and Brandom. While I claim that Fichte clearly *does* argue for such "metaphysical distinctness"—indeed he *bases* his claims regarding self-sufficiency straightforwardly on the distinctiveness of self-constituting subjectivity—the point moreover in the discussion of Fichte's idealism is that the first claim regarding distinctiveness is more compelling than the second claim regarding self-sufficiency, not least in the sense that the second claim doesn't follow from the first claim in the way Fichte seems to think it does, unless we accept a rather strong version of the mind-dependence of things which is neither necessitated by the first claim nor particularly appealing. The compellingness of the first claim by contrast accrues to the way Fichte addresses the putative problems within Kant's transcendentalist position as I will describe them.

Now, if a large portion of current scholarship in German Idealism is not particularly motivated by an interest in its theories of subjectivity as such, then this lack of interest applies perhaps to a greater degree to current Anglophone Heidegger scholarship, and perhaps to an even greater degree to so-called "Continental" approaches. The former, to risk unfair generalizations to which there will of course be exceptions, has tended to

⁷ See, for instance, his "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism"; included in Sedgwick, ed., *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy*. Cambridge, 2000; and the sections on Fichte in *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989.

focus on Heidegger's vehement anti-Cartesianism and affinities to later Wittgenstein, and the latter has tended to see Heidegger, with some justification, particularly with regard to his later works, as the progenitor of the "post-modern" idea of the "death of the subject". For both, the affinities with the classical tradition and its focus on subjectivity tend to be neglected or ignored. Indeed, it will seem surprising to some, and even ludicrous to others, to find Heidegger in the list of authors I have chosen to represent this tradition. It is true, for reasons we will discuss, that even in his early works, which are explicitly concerned with an analysis of *Dasein*, or human beings, Heidegger for the most part eschews the term "subjectivity" and indeed describes it as "ontologically inappropriate". His favored term in those works, including *Being and Time*, is rather "selfhood". But it will be one of my fundamental contentions that "selfhood" and "subjectivity" refer to the same phenomena, as I outlined it at the outset.

In fact, it will be the dominant contention of my discussion in part three that the "early Heidegger" is *most fruitfully* interpreted as precisely giving a theory of subjectivity in my sense, and that his existential analytic of *Dasein* fits squarely in the transcendental tradition as I will be laying it out; indeed, it figures in my account as the most plausible and philosophically compelling representative of that tradition. It will hopefully become clear that Heidegger is not so much interested in overthrowing or eliminating the concept of subjectivity as he is in giving, in his own words, "a more radical formulation of the concept of the subject". He writes that "the principle problem...is, after all, to determine exactly what and how the subject is—what belongs to the subjectivity of the subject".⁸

⁸ GP 238.

This interpretation becomes most compelling when seen through the lens of Heidegger's lectures and writings immediately following *Being and Time*, characterized by a renewed involvement with both Kant and the German Idealists—principally *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, but also shorter essays such as “What is Metaphysics?” and “On the Essence of Ground”. Heidegger says at the end of his 1927-28 lectures on Kant that when he “some years ago studied the *Critique of Pure Reason* anew...it caused the scales to fall from my eyes, and Kant became for me a crucial confirmation of the rightness of the path which I took [in *Being and Time*].”⁹

My discussion of Heidegger in part three will focus on the sense and the ways in which Heidegger's fundamental ontology remains rooted in the tradition of transcendental theories of subjectivity. Taking as a guiding clue Heidegger's own elliptical remark in the Kantbook that his interpretation of Kant, and *a fortiori* the alignment of his own philosophy with Kant and the transcendental tradition, shares an affinity with the insights offered by Kant's Idealist successors, but that his work “moves in the opposite direction of German Idealism”, I attempt to show what Heidegger's own theory of selfhood is taking from and what he is resisting in that tradition. Briefly put, Heidegger offers a theory of selfhood which insists on Dasein's sui generis metaphysical character as self-constituting, in such a way that Dasein's subjectivity is unified in its theoretical and practical possibilities according to its essential structure, but also in such a way which avoids the stronger, more robust idealist claims regarding self-sufficiency and mind-dependence.

⁹ PIK 431.

Since what follows can fairly be largely characterized as an exercise in the “history of philosophy”, before I begin I feel it necessary to say a word about my guiding attitude towards the issue of the *faithfulness* of both the Idealist and the Heideggerian interpretations of Kant’s philosophy, understood on its own terms. This issue—namely how faithful the Idealists or Heidegger are to the *spirit* and/or the *letter* of Kant’s writings, in particular the extent to which German Idealism marks a progression or an illegitimate digression from Kant’s “true” doctrines and aims, or how to understand the self-avowed “violence” of Heidegger’s interpretation—is a sticky and contentious one, to say the least. One of my ultimate goals is to show the ways in which Heidegger’s theory of selfhood can be best understood as a counter-move or counter-proposal—indeed a philosophically plausible and compelling one—to the Idealist resolution to the Kantian “problem” of the unity of theoretical subjectivity and of reason as a whole which their theories of subjectivity represent, while remaining significantly rooted in that tradition. So the *primary* desideratum in discussing Kant will not ultimately be to demonstrate the ways in which the Idealists—again taking Fichte as representative—or Heidegger did or did not “get it right” regarding Kant considered on Kant’s own terms. The goal in part one will be, rather, to understand the Kantian problem of the unity of subjectivity independently of the Idealists *but with the Idealist point of view in mind*, and to elucidate the motivations that guided their subsequent corrections or amendments to the Kantian system but which can be seen independently of those subsequent amendments. And this because one of my claims is that Heidegger will share many of these motivations.

The problems which the Idealists will identify represent, I think, genuine difficulties in Kant, but difficulties which to be sure could or might be possibly resolved from

considerations taken purely from a standpoint *internal* to the Kantian system itself. But that is not the project here. The project rather involves taking Kant's fourth question "What is the human being?" seriously—as the ultimate question of philosophy—and uncovering the characteristic features of the tradition it initiated. But to "take it seriously" means that the task of providing a theory of subjectivity that answers to it becomes in principle divorced from the particular demands of the Kantian framework. That task is to provide a unified account of human *being*, what it can, must, and may think and do, in order to understand what it can and should make of itself. My goal is to illuminate the philosophical development of the tradition of answering that question beginning with Kant and continuing through the German Idealists and to Heidegger. So the *ultimate* evaluative perspective I am interested in is how far we can still acknowledge the sense in which these thinkers did or did not "get it right" *in answering this question*, more so than how they did or did not "get it right" *regarding each other*. That said, the best way, I believe, to understand how each of them answered the question is to understand the ways in which they responded to the answers given by their predecessors.

The benefit of approaching this question historically then lies in the possibility that in emphasizing certain threads in the fabric of the traditional transcendentalist picture of subjectivity, woven in large part by these particular thinkers, a new pattern in the tapestry can become visible and predominant. Its coming to predominance will of course depend on the extent to which I succeed in making the image philosophically compelling, but my hope is that the new image can then serve as a guide to transcendentalist accounts of subjectivity which can offer counter-proposals to the now-predominant naturalizing accounts of what it is to be a human being.

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Part I: Kantian Dualism and the “Problem” of the Unity of Subjectivity

1) Kant and the Unity of Subjectivity

What is Kant’s account of subjectivity? As I explained in the introduction, Kant is supposed to have put subjectivity at the center of philosophy, to have enacted a “Copernican Revolution” and initiated a tradition of “transcendental philosophy”. But how and where does he thematize subjectivity as such? And what role does it play in his philosophical system?

In the lectures on logic, Kant says that the whole field of philosophy “in a cosmopolitan sense” can be subsumed under four main questions.

- 1) What can I know?
- 2) What should I do?
- 3) What may I hope?
- 4) What is the human being?¹⁰

So Kant adds a fourth question to the famous three from the Canon of the first *Critique*.¹¹ He identifies the four questions with metaphysics, morality, religion, and anthropology, respectively, and goes on to say that “in principle, one can reckon all of these to anthropology, because the first three are related to the last”.¹²

One knows where to look, at least, to find Kant’s answers to the first three questions: in the first two *Critiques*, at least, and in the *Religion*. But it is unclear if we are to find the answer to Kant’s fourth question, if indeed he has one, in the lectures and published

¹⁰ GS IX, 25.

¹¹ KRV A805/B833

¹² GS IX, 25. “Im Grunde könnte man aber alles dieses zur Anthropologie rechnen, weil sich die drei ersten Fragen auf die letzte beziehen”.

texts which bear the actual title “Anthropology”. How are we to understand the claim that the “whole field of philosophy” is “related” to the *anthropological* question “what is the human being”?

Kant describes “pragmatic anthropology”, with which his anthropological writings are largely concerned, as an “investigation of what *he* [the human being] as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself.”¹³ And this is opposed to an investigation of what *nature* makes of the human being, or what Kant calls a “physiological anthropology”. The distinction made here is between the human being considered as a purely natural being, molded and determined entirely by nature, and the human being considered as a “free-acting” being capable of a certain degree of self-determination. What we get in the texts on pragmatic anthropology themselves is best described as an amalgamation of ruminations on empirical faculty psychology, moral psychology, physiognomy, moral education and the like, at any rate something quite far removed from the purely a priori investigations contained in the *Critiques*.

I think there are two ways of understanding the “relatedness” Kant claims to exist between the first three questions and the last. On the first reading, the anthropological works function as a kind of empirical, pragmatic *application* of the a priori epistemological, moral, aesthetic and theological doctrines of the *Critiques*. They provide a descriptive typology of the sorts of temperaments, characters, and typical conducts among concrete, living human beings and their specific kinds of collective arrangements—races, nations, and so forth—sometimes with an implicit prescriptive evaluation of them. This reading, which is a natural and, I think, the standard one, has

¹³ GS VII, 119.

the following, by no means slight, advantage, i.e. that the answers to the last question, which Kant calls anthropological, are to be found in the writings which Kant actually calls anthropology—“found” perhaps in an incomplete, sketchy, or merely promissory state, but found nonetheless.

The other way of reading takes the “is” in the last question more seriously, and additionally, understands the “relatedness” in a foundational sense, that is, it ascribes to the last question a kind of logical priority. Under this reading, the answer to the question, “what *is* the human being?” is meant itself to inform the answers to the other questions concerning what the human being can, should, and is permitted to think and do. “Related to” is not taken here to mean “can be applied to” or “is useful for”, but rather something more like “is reducible to” or “amounts to”. If we want to know what the human being can know, should do, is permitted to hope, we have to ask what the human being itself *is*; only asking the latter directly will give us complete and satisfying answers to the former three.

Under this reading, the answer to the last question is not to be found in the anthropological writings themselves, which remain too *empirical* to fulfill the kind of role attached to it. So it is either to be found scattered about the other writings, in need of some kind of explicit reconstruction, or it is ultimately not answered by Kant at all. But although it distorts what Kant says about the final question in this way, the second reading is more faithful to the actual *letter* of the final question, which is not, after all, a question about how best to apply our philosophical knowledge in understanding particular empirical differences in temperaments, characters, etc. and in determining the specific conduct of our actual lives—as necessary and admirable as such a task might

be—but rather a question about what the human being *is*. And it is additionally more in the spirit of the *programmatic* remarks Kant makes about anthropology, namely, an investigation into the human being considered “*as a free-acting being*”. The very first paragraph of the *Anthropology* itself asserts that

The fact that the human being can have the “T” in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living things on earth. Because of this he is a *person*, and...through rank and dignity *an entirely different being from things*.¹⁴

On the second reading, to ask what the human being *is* is to ask about this unique *ontological* status, to ask how it is that this being is “an entirely different being from things” (ostensibly even from other *living* things).

Now what I am calling “the second reading” is, I want to maintain, very close to the attitude that the post-Kantian Idealists (and, ultimately, Heidegger) take toward the questions which Kant lays out in the *Logic* as exhausting the concerns of the “whole field of philosophy”. It should be said that the two different readings are not mutually exclusive, and, as I have said, the task of figuring out how to apply philosophy’s a priori findings in the conduct of our lives as concrete humans beings, or what I am calling the “first reading”, is not something the Idealists would want to shun or abandon. But the question remains about whether the task assumed by the second reading, namely, of developing an *ontological* account of the human being *qua free-acting* being—and taking up that task as the primary concern of philosophy—is a truly Kantian one.

There are, as we will see, perhaps good reasons to believe that the latter task is not, and indeed cannot be, Kant’s task. There are perhaps principled reasons within Kant’s system which necessarily exclude an account of the ontological uniqueness of the human

¹⁴ GS VII, 127, emphasis mine, though “person” and “things” are emphasized in the original as well.

being—and this is what I am calling a “theory of subjectivity”—from within the realm of philosophy’s tasks. And yet I will try to show that providing such a theory is in fact a primary desideratum of the Idealists and later, of the “early Heidegger”.

There are perhaps many ways to tell the story of how the Idealists “moved on” from Kant, and many ways in which it has in fact been told. Many, indeed most, involve identifying some kind of a *lacuna* in the Kantian system, a necessary question unanswered, or a necessary task unfulfilled. But whether or not the lacunae appear as such within Kant’s philosophy depends on how that philosophy is presented.

We can identify two main themes guiding the thought of those who begin writing in the immediate aftermath of Kant’s main works and who remain broadly sympathetic to the Kantian program—Reinhold, Fichte, the early Schelling, and the early Hegel. Each revolves around the alleged need to fill some kind of perceived lacuna in Kant’s philosophy. The first, perhaps most obvious, characteristic theme is the focus on *systematicity* and in particular the need to ground the systematic whole of philosophy on a *single principle*. This theme is played out beginning with Reinhold’s “Principle of Consciousness”, through to Fichte’s self-positing I and Schelling’s I as the “unconditioned in human knowledge”. The other theme is the focus on the “I” itself, that is, the need to develop a *theory of subjectivity*, and in particular of the *unity* of subjectivity, as the most important of philosophy’s genuine tasks.

These two themes become de facto intertwined in the thought of the Idealists; indeed, the second is seen as a way of fulfilling the requirements of the first, as evidenced by the fact that the proposed “first principle” usually involves some alleged fact about the I and its activity. But they are logically distinct, and in what follows I do not want to *focus* on

the question of *systematicity* as such, that is, the question why the Idealists feel the need to ground the systematic whole of philosophy on a single principle.¹⁵ Nor do I want to attempt to directly evaluate the *legitimacy* of such a move, i.e. consider whether there is really a lacuna *here* on Kant's own terms. Though the theme of systematicity will of course be addressed as well indirectly and *along the way*, I want rather to focus directly on the second theme, namely, to present the elements of Kant's philosophy in an attempt to illuminate the Idealist insistence on the need for a theory of subjectivity putatively lacking, or insufficiently developed, in Kant, and in particular to elucidate why this theory should take the form of a theory of the *unity* of subjectivity.

Kant's guiding question, in the problematic sense I have described, is "What is the human being?" The answer to this question can be embodied in a theory of subjectivity, because "subjectivity", as I am using the term, is meant to capture the kind of being that human beings possess, as opposed to the kind of being of things, or, more problematically, other living beings. And to ask about the unity of subjectivity is to ask about the human being in its wholeness, totality, and integrity, everything that he can, should, and may do. But for Kant, and for the Idealists as well, the uniqueness of the human being consists in the fact that she, among mortal creatures at least, alone possesses *reason*. So that the latter set of concerns becomes the question of the *unity of reason*.

But to see how the unity of reason becomes a problem for Kant—certainly, at least, from the point of view of the Idealists—we need to consider the *dualisms* in Kant in the face of which the question of unity arises. Now Kant's philosophy is famously rife with dualisms, between the analytic and synthetic, a priori and a posteriori, transcendental and

¹⁵ See Paul W. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*. Harvard, 2005.

empirical, phenomenal and noumenal, etc. But more important for our purposes are the dualisms Kant identifies, firstly, among our cognitive faculties and capabilities, i.e. between sensibility and understanding, and secondly, among the *uses* of reason in our lives, i.e. between theoretical and practical reason.

Accordingly, there are two separate issues which must be addressed concerning the question of the unity of subjectivity and of reason in Kant, corresponding to these two fundamental dualisms. The first issue is the unity of the *theoretical subject*, or the human being considered as a cognizer or knower. This will be the topic of the following section (§2). The other fundamental dualism is that between *theoretical reason* on the one hand—or the use of reason by the theoretical subject in its cognitive, scientific endeavors—and *practical reason* on the other—or the use of reason by the practical subject or agent in the endeavor to be moral. This issue will be discussed in section three (§3). Now, the theme of the unity of theoretical subjectivity can itself be seen as containing two different levels of unity. The first level will be our main object of concern in the discussion of theoretical subjectivity. This is the unity which gives rise to experience, or of consciousness of an objective rule-governed world, and is produced by the transcendental unity of apperception under the categories. We can call it the unity of *consciousness* or the unity of *experience*. At issue here is the functioning of the faculties of sensibility, understanding, and, more problematically, the transcendental imagination in the production of objective representation and objectively valid judgment.

Additionally, there is a second possible level of unity within theoretical subjectivity, i.e. one which refers to the necessary role of theoretical *reason* itself in cognition—as distinct from the role of the understanding (and of course, from sensibility)—namely in

its *regulative* use, that is, its role in giving the objective world the type of unity presupposed by genuine scientific endeavor, i.e., in giving experience the form of *nature*, understood as a totality governed by a reasonably finite set of fully general and determinate empirical laws. I mention this level because this issue seems to be what *Kant* has in mind when *he* discusses the issue of the “unity of reason” in the first *Critique*—as opposed to what is usually understood under that rubric—though it will not be an explicit topic of discussion here.¹⁶

The much more common sense of the “unity of reason” in the literature on Kant refers rather to the task of producing a unified conception of reason within both the scientific and moral domains—which is our second theme, discussed in section three. At issue here is the apparent contradiction between theoretical reason’s conception of *nature* and practical reason’s conception of the necessity of *freedom* for the possibility of morality. Reason at once *demands* that everything, including human actions, conform to the determinism of natural causation, and that causation through freedom must be possible for the reality of truly moral action. How to reconcile these seemingly incompatible demands? But also at issue in both fundamental dualisms is the compatibility of the conceptions of the *subject* and *subjectivity* which theoretical and practical reason respectively yield. Kant repeatedly refers to the “paradox” that the subject’s self-knowledge or self-conception is limited to its *empirical* manifestation as appearance in

¹⁶ That there is such a level of unity, that is, whether reason’s regulative principles are really required in order to arrive at science, over and above experience, is not uncontroversial. But as this particular question does not directly concern the Idealists and the Idealist critique of Kantian dualism, I will not discuss it here in much depth. What is important is that the account of the unity of the theoretical subject somehow (through the co-operation of sensibility, understanding, and reason) result in a conception of *nature*. The fact that Kant actually uses the phrase “unity of reason” only within the context of discussing reason’s regulative role in producing the concept of nature suggests that the issue refers primarily to the context of theoretical reason.

inner sense. How does this square with both the spontaneity required within the theoretical sphere itself, and the type of freedom required for morality? What *is* this spontaneity belonging to transcendental apperception, and how does it relate to practical freedom?

In section two, then, I will address Kant's bifurcation of the "stems of cognition"—sensibility and understanding—and the ambiguous place of the imagination within the system of faculties of Kant's transcendental psychology. I will discuss the role of these faculties in producing the unity of experience in the Transcendental Deduction of the first *Critique*, with an eye toward illuminating the types of issues regarding the ontological status of this originary synthesis and the role of the imagination which the Idealists and, later, Heidegger will focus on. My goal in this section will be to elucidate the motivations of the Idealists and Heidegger in developing a *metaphysics of subjectivity*, which they see as implicit in Kant's account, over against the claim made by interpreters such as Dieter Henrich that Kant's account of theoretical subjectivity is both non-metaphysical and involves an irreducible and legitimate "multi-dimensionality" or pluralism.

In the third section, I will consider the ways in which Kant attempts to reconcile the seeming incompatibility or tension in his accounts of theoretical and practical reason, in particular his teleological account of reason's regulative principles as producing a possible "transition" between nature and freedom, between the respective "demands" of theoretical and practical reason. I will consider the ways in which, anticipating the Idealist critique, one can remain dissatisfied with this attempt to produce a unified account of reason and of rational subjectivity which satisfies all of reason's demands. I

want here to demonstrate the motivation for the later Idealist call for a demonstration of the *self-sufficiency* of reason.

2) The Unity of Theoretical Subjectivity

Kant's problem in the first *Critique* is the “problem of metaphysics”. He says he wants to put metaphysics on the “secure path of a science”—by which he means a system of a priori cognition such as he thinks is to be found in mathematics and natural science—which he finds lacking in the tradition of rationalist metaphysics, and which he finds threatened by Humean skepticism. In the preface to the second edition he proposes a “change in our way of thinking” about metaphysics which has come to be called the “Copernican Revolution”.

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us.¹⁷

Kant's attempt to “transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics”¹⁸ involves an “altered method of our way of thinking” whose guiding presupposition is that “we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them.”¹⁹ Kant proposes that the only way to proceed in metaphysics is to affect a change of perspective in which we stop trying to consider how knowledge can result from the theoretical subject's conforming to objects, but rather by considering how knowledge is the result of objects conforming to the a priori cognitive procedures of the theoretical subject. Now for Kant these “cognitive procedures” are the a priori *synthetic* activity of the theoretical subject,

¹⁷ KRV, Bxvi.

¹⁸ KRV, Bxxii.

¹⁹ KRV, Bxvii.

or better, the *transcendental* subject. The point of the Transcendental Analytic is to show how the unifying synthetic activity of the theoretical subject provides the basis for the possibility of experience and thus of objective knowledge.

In the Transcendental Deduction section of the Analytic, Kant maintains that the fundamental principle of this synthetic activity is self-consciousness, that is, he claims that the ability to relate all of one's representations to oneself in a unified experience according to the rules provided by the understanding itself provides the basis of the possibility of objective knowledge. Kant calls this originary synthetic unity the transcendental unity of apperception. The unity of apperception, or the unifying activity of the theoretical subject on its own representations, then, is the enactment of the change in thinking in metaphysics that characterizes the Copernican Revolution. Representations of objects constitute objective experience and judgments about them are universally valid insofar as they conform to the rules guiding the unifying activity of the understanding which is identical to the synthetic activity of self-relation enacted in the unity of apperception.

The remainder of this section will be divided into three parts. After briefing discussing the role of apperception in the unity of the theoretical subject (a), I want to consider two types of dualisms that remain in place despite this unity. The first is between what Kant calls the "stems of cognition", sensibility and understanding, or the two fundamental sources of representation within the subject which cooperate in the achievement of theoretical and objective knowledge of the world. This will serve to introduce the problem of the "common root" of these stems and the problematic role of the transcendental imagination within the originary synthesis which is the basis of this

knowledge, and which will become a dominant theme within both the German Idealist and Heideggerian receptions of Kant's philosophy (b). The second dualism involves the status of the transcendental subject as an object of knowledge for itself. Kant maintains that the subject can only come to know itself as it is "in appearance", and can know nothing of itself "as it is in itself". This "paradox of subjectivity" will be an important theme in both the Idealists' and Heidegger's respective attempts at a *metaphysics* of subjectivity (c).

a) The "Subject" of the Unity of Apperception

In line with his proposed Copernican Revolution, Kant in the Transcendental Deduction asserts that all combination of representations within the manifold of intuition must be the *action* of the understanding; all synthesis is the result of the spontaneity of the understanding. "[W]e can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and...among all representations **combination** is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity [*ein Actus seiner Selbsttätigkeit*]."²⁰ Now, the fundamental activity of combination or synthesis—which is the basis of the unity of experience—Kant calls pure, or original, apperception, and the synthetic unity it engenders is called the unity of apperception. The mark of this synthesis is "a necessary

²⁰ KRV, B130.

relation to the **I think**”²¹, and for this reason it is also referred to as the unity of self-consciousness.

Kant says that the “I think must be able to accompany all of my representations”²²; and thus it is only because experience has the unity provided by each representation being combined in a *single* consciousness, i.e. only because I can recognize all representations as *my* representations and all combination of representations as the result of *my* combining them, that that experience can constitute objective cognition. Of course, this is only the case if it can be shown that the unity of apperception must be identical to the unity of representation under the form of objective judgment, or that the original combination effected by apperception must proceed in accordance with categorical rules which provide the basis of something’s being an object for us in general. This is of course precisely what Kant goes on to do in the remainder of the Deduction, but its specifics are not of immediate interest to us here. Instead, I’d like to focus on a few related aspects of the doctrine of apperception, which become evident if we ask the question, “who or what is the subject of this original synthesis, and what kind of knowledge (self-knowledge) can we thereby possess about it?”

Kant says that the “**I think** expresses the act of determining my existence [*Das, Ich denke, drückt den Actus aus, mein Dasein zu bestimmen*]”²³, and that “in the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, nor **as** I am in myself, but only **that** I am.”²⁴ So we have to be careful about the type of self-

²¹ KRV, B132.

²² KRV, B131.

²³ KRV, B157fn.

²⁴ KRV, B157.

consciousness and self-knowledge that is associated with original apperception. Kant is careful, for the most part, to stress that it is only the formal *ability* to attach the “I think” to each representation, as *my* representation, that characterizes pure apperception, not that I actually do or must so attach it to each representation. Actually being aware of a representation as mine, i.e. representing to myself “I think *x*”, is rather an instance of *empirical* apperception, which requires some specific determination of the manifold of intuition within inner sense (*x*). Original apperception is itself the *ground* of empirical self-consciousness, that is, awareness of the contents of one’s thoughts. It *produces* the simple representation “I think”²⁵, which itself is merely an *expression* of the original act of synthesis.

But just as the subject of pure apperception is to be distinguished from the empirical subject of self-consciousness, it is also to be distinguished from the I “as it is in itself”, that is, the noumenal self. And this for essentially the same reasons that we cannot know anything about things as they are in themselves, i.e. abstracted from the “limiting condition” of the form of our sensibility, in this case the form of inner sense, or time. We can only cognize ourselves under the form of time, that is, the secession of representations or thoughts we actually have. We can have, for example, no knowledge of our “souls” as they exist in themselves, whether they survive our deaths, etc²⁶. In the act of original synthesis, my own existence is *given* (“that I am”), but since the manifold of intuition is not also thereby given, but rather is determined by our receptivity, self-knowledge (“what I am” to myself) only extends to my empirical self within inner sense. Kant is explicit throughout the Deduction in insisting that we do not possess the kind of

²⁵ KRV, B132.

²⁶ I will return to this claim later on in this section.

“self-intuition” that would determine the *content* of my subjectivity as well as determining the *existence* of my subjectivity through pure apperception. This is important because, as we will see, the Idealists will insist on ascribing some kind of *intellectual intuition* to the subject of apperception, or the pure or unconditional I.

So what can be said about the *subject* of original apperception? Apperception, as we have seen, is essentially an *activity* of combining of representations; it is an act of spontaneous synthesis resulting in objective experience, in both awareness of the world of “external” objects and awareness of “an inner life” of thoughts, imaginations, etc. in time, that is, it is the basis of both empirical knowledge and self-knowledge. But can we then ask what or who is acting here, that is, doing the combining, and what kind of knowledge the subject of this pure activity can have of itself *qua* activity?

We have seen that the “I” of which we are, each of us, aware in empirical self-consciousness is only an appearance. Self-consciousness in this sense is derivative upon or conditioned by the original self-relating of pure apperception, and being explicitly aware of this self-relating is not a necessary condition of its existence. Kant also claims, as I have here stated but will explore in a bit more detail shortly, that we have no knowledge of the self as it exists “in itself”, or what rational psychology would call the “soul”. We know of original apperception only that it is a spontaneous activity, and that this activity is a condition of objectivity and self-awareness.

But to say this is already to say a lot. Despite Kant’s seeming reticence to give a metaphysical characterization of the transcendental subject, and despite his insistence that it must remain in darkness, we already have both negative and positive characterizations of it which are neither empty nor insignificant. Positively speaking we know that it is an

activity, and a spontaneous self-activity that is not only the enabling condition of experience and empirical self-awareness, but an activity that brings itself into existence. This is the meaning of calling the activity *spontaneous*, and, Kant says, “this spontaneity is the reason I call myself an **intelligence**.”²⁷ Additionally, as mentioned at the outset, Kant asserts in the *Anthropology* that this feature of spontaneity fundamentally marks the transcendental subject as having “an entirely different being from **things**”. It is a mark of subjectivity that it can never be considered a thing, a mere object.²⁸

Kant also maintains that this feature of spontaneity “raises [the human being] infinitely above all other living things on earth”.²⁹ But he is also repeatedly insistent in these sections of the *Critique* that the type of intelligence at issue here in the case of the transcendental subject is to be carefully distinguished from other possible types of intelligence—say, a divine intelligence—by virtue of its dependence on a faculty of receptivity in supplying the determinable content of experience.³⁰

Now I do not have yet another self-intuition, which would give the **determining** in me, of the spontaneity of which alone I am conscious, even before the act of **determination**, in the same way as time gives that which is to be determined, thus I cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being, rather I merely represent the spontaneity of my thought, i.e. of the determining...³¹

²⁷ KRV B158fn.

²⁸ GS VII, 127. It is these latter two features of transcendental subjectivity, as I will discuss in the next part, that will so profoundly impress Fichte and inspire his conception of the self-positing I.

²⁹ GS VII, 127. This claim is of course controversial, and there are those who would insist on a categorical continuity with, at least, higher animals, by insisting that the latter in fact possess some relevant kind of self-consciousness, or by denying that self-consciousness is itself a necessary condition of the relevant kind of intentionality roughly in line with Kant’s sense of intentionality, but I needn’t discuss those issues here.

³⁰ The spontaneity which marks human intelligence is presumably to be distinguished by that possessed by *angels* as well but the fundamental difference between these two becomes much more obvious in the context of Kant’s practical philosophy.

³¹ KRV B158fn.

Kant glosses this type of “self-intuiting spontaneity” or of an “understanding that itself intuits”, which he explicitly identifies with *divine* understanding, as one “which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given, or produced”.³² This type of creative intelligence, which produces the existence of the objects in the act of representing them, would possess rather an *intellectual intuition*.

So the transcendental subject is what we can call a *finite subjectivity*, a spontaneous synthesizing activity which depends on a faculty of receptivity, or sensibility, to provide its matter, the manifold of intuition. But is this a metaphysical claim? If we consider metaphysics under some broad definition, in which its tasks include providing an inventory of beings and their types, and furthermore spelling out the *nature* or *essences* ascribed to these types respectively, it’s hard, I think, to avoid considering Kant’s remarks on the transcendental subject to be metaphysical. Kant can be seen here as situating human subjectivity, and a fortiori human beings tout court, within the inventory of beings. Human beings *by nature* possess the type of spontaneity which defines what we would today call intentionality, but also by nature remain tied to the limiting condition of sensibility.³³ This can be seen as an account of the *essence* of human existence and intentionality, and it serves to give human subjectivity a *sui generis ontological status*.³⁴

³² KRV B145.

³³ Again, I am bracketing here the question of whether higher animals, or it should be said now, artificial intelligences, also possess this type of (self-conscious) intentionality.

³⁴ For an ever-handed and penetrating discussion of how to interpret Kant’s claim that the cognitive subject is spontaneous, see Pippin’s “Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind”, included in his *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997. The claim that Kant’s ascription of spontaneity to theoretical subjectivity should be given a metaphysical meaning has been resisted by many, most notably Patricia Kitcher. See, for instance, her “Kant’s Real Self “ in *Kant on Self and Nature*, ed. by Allen Wood. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985; and her *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990. More recent attempts to justify a metaphysical interpretation are given, e.g., by

But is it a metaphysical claim by Kant's own lights? For Kant, of course, metaphysics *considered as a science*, amounts to the sum total of *synthetic a priori* propositions. Are we dealing here with a synthetic a priori proposition? Certainly it is meant to be a priori, as it does not seem correct to say that we know it through some kind of empirical observation. To know something empirically is a matter of providing some concept with an empirical content, through receptivity. In fact, part of the *point* here seems to be that the concept of subjectivity itself can never have empirical content, i.e. be an object, a *thing*. As Kant says, it has "an entirely different being from *things*".³⁵ Is it synthetic? This is perhaps unclear. Could it be analytic, i.e. part of the very concept of subjectivity that it is a finite self-activity? Probably not, but it seems to me hard to avoid the sense that *this* particular claim, that transcendental subjectivity is finite self-activity that is responsible for the original synthetic activity that grounds all objectivity and empirical self-awareness, and that this subjectivity therefore is ontologically unique, has a different status than the other propositions that make up a critical metaphysics.

Even if a case could be made for considering this claim as a synthetic a priori proposition, Kant doesn't seem to attempt to *justify* it in the manner he does other such propositions. Such metaphysical claims, under this framework, require transcendental arguments. And other classical synthetic a priori propositions, such as 'all events have a cause' or even, arguably, that the "I think" must be able to accompany all of my representations', that is, the central claims of the *Critique*, seem to have such arguments associated with them. Nevertheless, the claim that transcendental subjectivity is an ontologically unique finite self-activity seems to be an absolutely central claim of, even

Arthur Melnick in his *Kant's Theory of the Self*. New York: Routledge, 2009; and Colin Marshall in his "Kant's Metaphysics of the Self". *Philosophers' Imprint* 10:8 (2010), 1-21.

³⁵ GS VII, 127.

the very ground of, transcendental philosophy itself in Kant's sense. And if we consider metaphysics to provide an inventory of types of beings and their essences, it seems that that transcendental philosophy is resting on a crucial metaphysical claim. Kant does not seem to be aware of, or at least interested in, spelling out the import of this striking metaphysical claim. But as I will try to show in the following chapters, it is precisely this import which so impresses the early Idealists, and subsequently Heidegger.

b) The “Common Root” and the Homelessness of Transcendental Imagination

Kant says that all theoretical cognition arises from “two fundamental sources in the mind [zwei Grundquellen des Gemüts]”³⁶, namely receptivity and spontaneity. Our capacity [Fähigkeit] for receptivity, that is, the ability to “acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects is called sensibility.”³⁷ The faculty [Vermögen] for “bringing forth representations itself, or the spontaneity of cognition, is the understanding.”³⁸ So there are two separate capacities or faculties which are distinct but mutually necessary for cognition, namely sensibility and understanding. This distinction is of course crucial for Kant and the whole project of the first *Critique*, and forms the basis of the architectonic separation of the text into the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Analytic, but Kant says very little about the origin of this distinction or its justification. In the Introduction, he writes,

All that seems necessary for an introduction or preliminary is that there are two stems of human cognition, which may perhaps arise from a common but to us

³⁶ KRV A50/B74.

³⁷ KRV A19/B33.

³⁸ KRV A50/B74.

unknown root [*die vielleicht aus einer gemeinschaftlichen, aber uns unbekannten Wurzel entspringen*], namely sensibility and understanding, through the first of which objects are given to us, but through the second of which they are thought.³⁹

On the face of it, there are at least two reasons to think that the distinction between the two stems of cognition must be preserved. Firstly, each represents an indispensable feature of the kind of finite subjectivity that Kant ascribes to human beings, and subsequently, preserving the integrity of each seems essential to the theory of human cognition that Kant is developing in the first *Critique*. The self-activity or spontaneity that Kant says gives rise to experience *must* be delimited by the conditions of human receptivity or sensibility, that is, the spontaneity necessary for cognition *must* be beholden or responsive to the content of the manifold of intuition, which is provided *only* passively, i.e. *affected* by something, if the result of that synthetic activity is to represent the world objectively. Secondly, it's *prima facie* hard to see what it would *mean* for two faculties, one spontaneous, the other receptive, i.e. active and passive respectively, to be reducible to or originate in a third faculty.⁴⁰ If understanding itself is wholly active, and sensibility itself wholly passive, the so-called common root would seem to have to be wholly active and wholly passive at the same time. Indeed in the *Anthropology*, Kant seems to rescind the possibility of the common root hinted at in the previous passage for just this reason.

Despite their dissimilarity, understanding and sensibility by themselves form a close union for bringing about our cognition, as if one had its origin in the other, or both originated from a common origin; but this cannot be, or at least we cannot conceive how dissimilar things could sprout forth from one and the same root.⁴¹

³⁹ KRV A15/B29.

⁴⁰ “*Prima facie*”, perhaps, but as we will see in part three, I think cases in which we must ascribe both activity and passivity “at the same time and in the same respect” are actually quite pervasive.

⁴¹ GS VII, 177.

There are three possibilities here if we give these two passages equal footing. Either (1) Kant denies the possibility of the common root, or (2) he leaves it open *as a possibility* but believes that knowledge of it is *in principle* inaccessible to us, or (3) he believes that *we may yet* discover what the common root is, even though we cannot conceive at the moment what, or even how, it could be. At the very least, it doesn't seem to be a question Kant is particularly interested in, and indeed it is one for which, unlike the question of the unity of theoretical and practical reason, he never himself suggests an answer. In contrast, it is a question in which both the early Idealists and Heidegger in their readings of Kant are very much interested. Each in their own way choose the third option and claim that the common root is in fact discoverable, and furthermore that it is some form of the faculty of transcendental imagination. At least among the faculties that Kant discusses, this possible candidate immediately suggests itself for reasons that I hope to ultimately make clear. In the remainder of this section however, I want to give a preliminary sense of the role of the transcendental imagination within the first *Critique*, particularly in the Transcendental Deduction, and to loosen and begin to dislodge the sense that identifying the common root is an impossible or hopeless endeavor.

The faculty of imagination holds a troubled place in Kant's system. Kant of course returns to imagination in the third *Critique* and assigns it a crucial role in the formation of *aesthetic judgment*. Even if a proper understanding of the exact way in which it is functioning there is difficult to achieve, its specific role and place relative to the other faculties at work, notably here the understanding, is *relatively* clear-cut. But its role in the formation of *empirical* judgment, i.e. objective cognition, within the argument of the Transcendental Deduction is particularly troubled and ambiguous. In what follows I

want to highlight this ambiguity, and discuss its relationship to the original synthetic unity whose activity grounds all experience, both objective empirical cognition and subjective self-awareness, and which I have been insisting is the essence of finite subjectivity on Kant's account. I hope in the process to begin to make clear why the Idealists, and Heidegger after them, find so much promise in the project of reconfiguring Kant's account of subjectivity by foregrounding the role of imagination. I also want to consider Dieter Henrich's arguments that this Idealist project of locating the common root in the imagination is thoroughly un-Kantian and represents an abandonment of the Critical project.

In my earlier discussion of the subject of transcendental apperception, I tried to give an initial assessment of the metaphysical import of the spontaneity or self-activity associated with the original synthesis which gives rise to empirical cognition and self-awareness. There, this spontaneity was attached to the synthetic unity of apperception, which Kant in the B-edition equates with "the understanding itself"⁴². In fact, the situation is somewhat more complex than this. In the Metaphysical Deduction, which is common to both editions, Kant defines synthesis in general as the "*action* of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition"⁴³. But then he immediately describes synthesis in general as the "mere effect of the *imagination*, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul."⁴⁴ This raises the question whether the element of *spontaneity* required for cognition actually accrues to the faculty of imagination, whether we should consider imagination as

⁴² KRV B134 fn.

⁴³ KRV A77/B103. *italics mine*.

⁴⁴ KRV A78/B103. *again, italics my own*.

representing the *active* element in cognition. Kant suggests this again when he goes on to describe the “three things” that must be given a priori in cognition. The first is the manifold of pure intuition, the second is the synthesis of this manifold “by means of the imagination”, and the third is the concepts which give this synthesis unity. He says that the synthesis of the imagination “does not yield cognition” and that it must be *brought* to concepts, which depends on the understanding, in order to arrive at cognition “in the proper sense”. But it is unclear at this stage if this “bringing to concepts”, or instilling the synthetic unity with a specific kind of unity, involves an *additional* activity, over and above the spontaneity of the imagination.

It should be noted that the term “cognition [*Erkenntnis*]” does not seem to be univocal here. When Kant defines synthesis as the collecting of various representations in one cognition, or says that the “synthesis of a manifold...first brings forth a cognition, which to be sure may initially still be raw and confused”, we are to distinguish this from cognition in the proper sense [*in eigentlicher Bedeutung*], which involves concepts and thus presumably, if the concepts are pure, possesses objective validity. But does having a cognition “in a proper sense” demand an additional spontaneous activity, require the understanding to step in, as it were, and reorganize the synthetic unity according to concepts? Although it’s not entirely clear what the raw and confused cognitions would amount to, the passage rather suggests to me that we should consider the faculty of imagination to exhaust the active element in synthesis. The difference then would not be whether the understanding is also active or not, but whether the synthesis of the imagination is conducted *according to concepts*, i.e. the rules of the understanding, or not. Kant says that “synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements for

cognitions and unifies them into a certain content”⁴⁵. Notice that in his description of the “three things” necessary for cognition, only the synthesis of imagination is described as an activity. The synthesis of imagination “alone” is responsible for *producing* content, and conducting this synthesis in accordance with the rules provided by the concepts of the understanding can be seen as a condition on the synthesis producing content *of a certain kind*, namely objective cognitions “in the proper sense”. Rules in themselves are *static* things, a set of guidelines, and it is *following* the rule (or not) in “putting the representations together with each other” which requires an activity of some kind, and this, I am suggesting, can be ascribed to imagination. Before I elaborate on this possible line of interpretation, I need to consider what Kant says about imagination in both editions of the Deduction themselves, including where they seem to differ.⁴⁶

In the last paragraph of the preparatory remarks to the Transcendental Deduction in the A-edition, which is excised in the B-edition, Kant again asserts that there are *three* “original sources [*ursprüngliche Quellen*], (capacities or faculties of the soul) [*(Fähigkeiten oder Vermögen der Seele)*] which contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and cannot themselves be derived from any other faculty of the mind”⁴⁷. These are sense, imagination, and apperception. How are we to square this with the earlier assertions that all cognition arises from *two* fundamental sources in the mind

⁴⁵ KRV A77/B103.

⁴⁶ The literature on the Transcendental Deduction and the relationship between the A- and B-edition presentations is, of course, quite large. Of particular note is Henrich’s classic “Kant’s Notion of a Deduction and the Methodological Background of the First *Critique*”, included in Förster, ed. *Kant’s Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum*. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989; Allison’s account in *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983; and Guyer’s in *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987

⁴⁷ KRV A94. The passage under discussion is replaced in the B-edition with a historical remark describing the intention of the *Critique* to steer “human reason between the two cliffs” of enthusiasm and skepticism, represented by Locke and Hume respectively, and no mention at all is made about imagination or the sources of cognition.

[*Grundquellen des Gemüts*], receptivity and spontaneity, and that there are thus *two* stems [*Stämme*] of human cognition, sensibility and understanding?

In the second section of the A-Deduction, Kant discusses the threefold synthesis which is found in all objective cognition: apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. Each of the syntheses can be seen as a transcendental step in which some element of cognition or mental action is shown to be a necessary condition of what comes before if cognition in the proper sense is to be achieved, though it should be kept in mind that Kant is not intending us to consider them as three separate syntheses. In apprehension, Kant asserts that having a manifold of intuition at all requires some synthetic activity in which representations, as mere *modifications* of the mind, are “run through” and “taken together” *as* a manifold. Now, the origin of *this* activity, i.e. the synthesis which results in a manifold of intuition, is not entirely clear here and I won’t discuss it now⁴⁸. More interesting for present purposes is the other two syntheses.

By “synthesis of reproduction” Kant means the activity in which representations become associated with each other, in which “one of the representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule.”⁴⁹ Kant argues that the empirical rules of association governing these transitions in the mind (which he calls empirical imagination)—say, using his famous example, thinking of cinnabar upon perceiving a certain shade of red—would not be possible if the representations themselves were not actually subject to such a rule. So, he goes on, we must assume a

⁴⁸ Though it should be said that there is reason to believe that this synthesis can be straightforwardly attributed to the imagination, insofar as the synthesis presupposes an activity. “There is thus an active faculty of the synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call imagination, and whose action exercised immediately upon perceptions I call apprehension.” (A121) This suggests that the synthesis of apprehension is itself conducted by the imagination, which would not be strange considering Kant’s claim that *all* synthesis is an effect of imagination.

⁴⁹ KRV A100.

transcendental faculty of the imagination a priori, which provides “the sort of combination of the manifold that makes possible a thoroughgoing synthesis of reproduction”⁵⁰, namely a faculty whose synthesis is guided by *a priori* rules which themselves ground the possibility of the empirical laws of reproduction and association.

So, the type of synthetic unity which constitutes cognition of an *object*—as opposed to, as Kant says, “a blind play of representations, i.e. less than a dream”, which would reduce our empirical imagination to a “dead and to us unknown faculty”—is that unity which is guided by certain *necessary* rules of reproduction, and the necessity of certain associations or reproductions is grounded in the *concept* of the object.⁵¹ Now Kant asserts that this synthesis of recognition in the concept itself requires a transcendental ground, and this is transcendental apperception, or the consciousness of one’s unchanging, stable, numerical identity through all synthesis, or consciousness of the unity of one’s synthetic activity *in one consciousness*.

Thus the original and necessary consciousness of the identity of oneself is at the same time a consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances in accordance with concepts, i.e. in accordance with rules that not only make them *necessarily reproducible*, but also thereby determine an object for their intuition, i.e. the concept of something in which they are *necessarily connected*.⁵²

Now, in the third section of the A-deduction, Kant goes on to represent the threefold synthesis as “unified and in connection”—again, there is after all only one synthesis taking place—and to discover what he calls the “inner ground” of this connectedness. In this regard, he says that we have to begin with pure apperception, which yields the

⁵⁰ KRV A101.

⁵¹ Of course, the argument of the transcendental deduction goes on to maintain that this necessary unity in one consciousness must itself be guided by rules which provide the concept of an object *in general* (=x), and these a priori rules are the *categories*.

⁵² KRV A108, all italics mine.

“absolutely first” principle of thinking in general, the *a priori* principle of all synthetic unity.

This synthetic unity, however, presupposes a synthesis, or includes it, and if the former is to be necessary *a priori* then the latter must also be a synthesis *a priori*. Thus the transcendental unity of apperception is related to the pure synthesis of the imagination, as an *a priori* condition of the possibility of all composition of the manifold in a cognition. But only the productive synthesis of the imagination can take place *a priori*...the necessary unity of the pure (productive) synthesis of the imagination prior to apperception is thus the ground of the possibility of all cognition, especially that of experience.⁵³

What is remarkable about the A-deduction is this *priority* given to the pure, productive imagination; it is portrayed as the active faculty, itself responsible for all pure synthesis, and thus the ground of all cognition.

We therefore have a pure imagination, as a fundamental faculty of the human soul, that grounds all cognition *a priori*. By its means we bring into combination the manifold of intuition on the one side and the condition of the necessary unity of apperception on the other. Both extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected by means of this transcendental function of the imagination.⁵⁴

In passages like this it becomes clear why it is sometimes suggested that Kant in fact already possessed the resources to locate the “common but to us unknown root” in the faculty of productive imagination. But, recalling the earlier discussion of the subject of original synthesis, and my suggestions of the potential metaphysical import of this type of spontaneity or self-activity, it also becomes clearer why the early Idealist attempts to “complete” the Kantian project with a metaphysics of subjectivity involve focusing on the faculty of imagination.

We are now in a position to continue the line of interpretation I began earlier, according to which it is the faculty of *imagination* that manifests the type of self-activity

⁵³ KRV A118.

⁵⁴ KRV A124.

that bequeaths human subjectivity its unique ontological status. It is the locus of mental activity as such, the name given to the power of the mind to act from and upon itself; it is what makes subjectivity *subjectivity*, viz. something essentially distinguished from *things*. Now, Kant himself recognizes that assigning imagination such a role in grounding cognition seems “certainly strange”. And indeed, several problems immediately present themselves.

Firstly, Kant describes imagination as a “blind” function of the soul, and it seems unlikely that a blind, unruly mental activity could be assigned the role of the fundamental ground of cognition, and the source of spontaneity. Secondly, there are a plethora of places, including the B-deduction which I will discuss shortly, where spontaneity is associated rather with the faculty of *understanding*. Both of these concerns can be addressed together. To begin with, it’s not clear that “blind” here is meant to indicate that it is not rule-governed. It might *seem*, given Kant’s repeated description of the understanding as the “faculty of rules”, that the way to distinguish between the spontaneous activity of the imagination on the one hand and that of the understanding on the other is that the latter is rule-governed while the former is not. But in fact it *must* be the case that the synthetic activity of the imagination, both in its empirical-reproductive activity and in its original-productive activity, proceeds in accordance with some rule or other, if the content which results is to be determinate to any degree whatsoever. We should keep in mind here a distinction which Kant hints at throughout the A-deduction—though he doesn’t I believe always carefully apply it—namely the distinction between *rules* and *laws*.

All combination or association of representations proceeds according to *rules*, otherwise, Kant says, we would only have “unruly heaps” of unconnected representations and imagination would be for us a “dead” faculty. *Laws* are rules of combination which have an objective ground. “Rules, insofar as they are objective, are called laws.”⁵⁵ And laws are thus distinguished by their *necessity*. “[T]he representation of a universal condition in accordance with which a certain manifold (of whatever kind) **can** be posited is called a **rule**, and, if it **must** be so posited, a **law**.”⁵⁶ The principle of a *law*—which, when applied to a manifold, yields objective content—is based in the “affinity” of the combined representations. Certain representations just belong together if the synthetic manifold is to have an objective determinate content. The pure understanding, i.e. the categories, is, of course, the source of the sort of affinity of representations which yields the form of an object in general.

We can conceive of the understanding, then, as a set of constraints on the spontaneous synthetic activity of the imagination, as a set of rules (concepts) and laws (pure concepts or categories) which give the resultant content a certain form. Concepts make the determinate content discursive, and the categories make the content objectively valid, i.e. a *cognition in the proper sense*. But within this picture we are free to consider the imagination as the name of our capacity for spontaneity as such; understanding then is the name of the set of principles, rules and laws which the imagination follows in yielding various types of determinate content. We can say that the understanding is itself spontaneous, but only because it is the *form* (both empirical and pure) of the synthetic activity of the imagination, which represents spontaneous self-activity as such. In itself

⁵⁵ KRV A126.

⁵⁶ KRV A113.

then the understanding is purely formal, and depends on the activity of the imagination.

“It is apperception that must be added to the pure imagination in order to make its function intellectual.”⁵⁷ This can also make sense of the passages in which Kant seems to *define* understanding in terms of imagination. “**The unity of apperception in relation to the synthesis of imagination is the understanding**, and this very same unity, in relation to the **transcendental synthesis** of the imagination, is the **pure understanding**.”⁵⁸ So if we want to identify the understanding itself as a spontaneous faculty, this is only and simply because it *is* “imaginative activity” *with a certain form*.

Of course, the point of the Transcendental Deduction is to prove the objective validity of the categories, i.e. to prove that the application of the categories is a necessary condition of experience, that is, cognition in the proper sense. But if we abstract from this immediate purpose and use the resources of the Deduction in considering what a Kantian picture of transcendental psychology or *mental activity in general* would look like, the interpretation of the imagination as the true source of spontaneity gains further credibility. The imagination as spontaneity is the source of all mental activity, i.e. all transitions in thought from one representation to another. Its synthetic activity must at a bare minimum adhere to the formal condition of the unity of apperception, otherwise I couldn’t identify the representations as *my own* or the transitions as those *I* was making. Furthermore, the transitions or combinations must be in accordance with *some rule or other*, because all thinking is discursive, that is, conceptual. Now, if the thinking is to amount to objective cognition, the imaginative activity must proceed in accordance with the objective laws represented both by the empirical and pure concepts of the

⁵⁷ KRV A124.

⁵⁸ KRV A119.

understanding. If I am have an objective cognition of cinnabar, for example, the representation of this shape must be combined with the representation of this shade of red and the representation of this amount of heaviness; and it must conform to the pure conditions of objecthood in general, e.g. have certain causal properties, etc.

But objective cognition is of course not the only telos of mental activity or thinking; there are of course all sorts of mental activity that don't amount to cognition *in the proper sense*, e.g. memories, dreams, free associations. In all of these cases, the rules governing the transitions or combinations in the mind must be rule-based in some way or other, and indeed seem to require some application of the categories, but the rules may be purely subjective or idiosyncratic, or some of the categories may be missing. Cinnabar may remind me of my grandmother, or I may imagine green cinnabar, or dream of cinnabar which floats in water, or even dream of a piece of cinnabar which is also a pumpkin at the same time.

If Kant says that the imagination is “blind”, then, he cannot mean that it is not rule-governed. We should, I believe, interpret this to mean that the specific ways in which it is rule-governed, that is, the rules which it is following in any particular case, are not always and needn't be in principle accessible to us; the original synthesis is a “hidden art in the depths of the human soul”. But the synthesis of imagination, though always *rule-*governed in some way or other, needn't be *law-*governed. This only happens in a specific variant of mental activity, namely *cognition*. In cognition, the synthesis of imagination proceeds in accordance with the laws stipulated by the pure understanding.

Now, the situation in the B-deduction, at least on the surface, is quite different. It can seem as if the faculty of imagination is being eliminated. Here, all combination is the

action of the *understanding*. “[T]he combination of a manifold in general...is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation, and, since one must call the latter understanding...all combination...is an action of the understanding”; and “among all representations combination is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity.”⁵⁹ So, all the things that were attributed in the A-Deduction to the faculty of imagination, namely all synthetic self-activity, are attributed rather in the B-Deduction to understanding. Kant here abandons the threefold distinction between apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. The argument of the B-Deduction itself, then, begins immediately with the synthetic unity of apperception, as the highest principle of all synthetic unity, which Kant identifies with the understanding itself⁶⁰. The argument then proceeds in successive steps to prove that the unity of apperception must be in accordance with the unity of an object in general, namely it must be in accordance with the categories.

The faculty of productive imagination is introduced in section 24 of the Deduction, but its role seems to be quite different than it was in the A-edition. In section 22, Kant draws a distinction between *thinking* and *cognizing* an object. This seems to be very close to the distinction which I have drawn in the discussion of the A-edition between cognition *in general* and cognition *in the proper sense*. Thinking of an object requires that the unity of representation adhere to the conditions of representing an object in general, that is, the categories. But Kant here calls this mental activity merely *intellectual*, and notes that empirical cognition, or experience, “cognition in the proper sense”, requires application of the categories to empirical, or sensible, intuition. The categories, Kant says, are mere

⁵⁹ KRV B129-130, emphasis removed.

⁶⁰ KRV B134fn.

forms of thought and only when the synthetic activity of apperception—by itself merely intellectual—is a synthesis of the manifold of sensible intuition do the categories acquire objective reality and constitute empirical cognition.

Now in section 24 Kant identifies *this* synthesis, which he calls *figurative* in contrast to the intellectual synthesis of understanding alone, with the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, which is the work of the productive imagination. It should be noticed then how this effectively reverses the roles of understanding and imagination from those they played in the A-deduction, at least under the interpretation I have suggested.

According to the latter, the imagination is responsible for the work of synthesis, as mental self-activity in general, which by itself merely constitutes thought or cognition in general.

It is only when the synthesis proceeds in a certain kind of cooperation with the understanding, or to be more precise, when the synthesis is rule-like in the right way, or rather law-like, or has the proper form provided by the understanding, does the synthetic unity yield empirical cognition in the proper sense. According to the B-edition of the Deduction, the understanding as the locus of all combinative activity itself conducts the synthesis. Rather than, as in the offered interpretation of the A-deduction, the understanding being the name of a certain kind of *form* which the original synthesis can take, the understanding here is to be understood as an active faculty in its own right, which taken by itself can only yield mere objects of thought, that is, mental content in general, and it is only when the imagination contributes its figurative synthesis do we have proper empirical cognition or experience.

Of course, as in the A-deduction, the syntheses of understanding and imagination are not meant to be understood as numerically distinct. In fact, at one point Kant seems to

explicitly identify them. “It is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of imagination and here under the name of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition.”⁶¹ Indeed, Kant says imagination is merely “an effect of the understanding on sensibility and its first application.”⁶² But there must be at least a conceptual distinction between them, and we can find this if we recall the distinction between thought and cognition. Figurative synthesis is synthesis of the sensible manifold, and, Kant says, imagination belongs to sensibility. Intellectual synthesis however needn’t involve the action of the imagination, as in mere thinking which falls short of objective reality. Understanding is mental activity abstracted from sensible conditions.

Ultimately, then, there is not as wide of a gap as it might first appear between the A- and B-editions in terms of the pictures of the relationship they respectively yield between the faculties, specifically between imagination and understanding. But there still decidedly remains a difference of emphasis or primacy. The B-edition seems to shift away from the talk of the imagination’s fundamental role in original synthesis present in the A-edition, in favor of the imagination’s dependence on the synthetic activity of the understanding. “Now that which connects the manifold of sensible intuition is imagination, which depends on understanding for the unity of its intellectual synthesis and on sensibility for the manifoldness of apprehension.”⁶³ I will not try to speculate here about the reasons for this shift; we will return to it later in discussing Heidegger’s claim that Kant “shrinks back” from his discovery of the originary role of imagination in

⁶¹ KRV B162fn.

⁶² KRV B152.

⁶³ KRV B164.

the Kantbook. But it should be mentioned that perhaps not too much emphasis should be placed initially on the notion of “dependence” here. It is clear that there is always a mutual interdependence, in the sense of a necessary cooperation, between all of the alleged faculties within the various types of mental activity.

What I hope to have evoked at least initially is the sense, to use Heidegger’s phrase, of the “homelessness” of imagination within the two versions of the Deduction, and by extension, within the project of the entire first *Critique*. Besides Kant’s provocative and puzzling remark concerning the common root, we may be struck by the ambiguity of the two remarks concerning the fundamental or original sources of human cognition (intentionally leaving this term itself ambiguous); on the one hand: sensibility and understanding (identified as the faculties of receptivity and spontaneity respectively); and on the other hand: sense, imagination, and apperception. Given the weight I have placed on the question of the metaphysical import of the original synthesis which is the purview of the type of spontaneity distinctive of human subjectivity, anticipating the concerns of the Idealists and Heidegger, the question legitimately arises about where this spontaneity lies, to which faculty or faculties it is to be assigned. In the A-Deduction, I suggested that we can understand the productive imagination as the paradigmatic spontaneous faculty, the locus of all original synthesis, and the understanding as spontaneous insofar as its formal laws give a certain form to the unity of the activity. In the B-Deduction, the imagination has lost its fundamental role as the faculty of synthesis in general, which accrues rather to the understanding, but remains itself a bona fide spontaneous faculty, even though, Kant says, it “belongs to sensibility”, that is, a faculty of receptivity. This is in itself not a problem, because it can simply mean that the imagination, as opposed to

the understanding which can remain purely intellectual, must necessarily unify a *sensible* manifold.⁶⁴ But if all that I have said is accurate, it does create a problem for an easy identification of the dualism between receptivity and spontaneity, which must remain an absolutely fundamental distinction within Kant's account of finite human subjectivity, and the dualism of sensibility and understanding, which seems to give structure to most of the architectonic and the form of the arguments of the first *Critique*. A precise picture of the role of imagination qua spontaneous faculty and thus qua essential faculty of human subjectivity distinctive from the understanding remains obscure and elusive. I also hope to have evoked the sense of promise the Idealists and Heidegger attached to the faculty of imagination as both the faculty of human spontaneity par excellence, and the faculty which may perhaps prove to be the original source or common root of both sensibility and understanding.

Dieter Henrich addresses the issue of the common root in his article "On the Unity of Subjectivity"⁶⁵. The article is explicitly framed as a critique of the attempt on behalf of both the Idealists and Heidegger to identify the common root with the faculty of imagination. Henrich maintains that Kant in fact must deny in principle that any knowledge of the common root is possible, and additionally tries to show that Kant adheres to a necessary irreducible *pluralism* of faculties, and that the structure of subjectivity on Kant's account is defined by an "intrasubjective teleology" among faculties which is essentially "multidimensional". He argues for this firstly by placing

⁶⁴ Though it does seem odd in this context that in the B-edition Kant defines imagination as "the faculty for representing an object even **without its presence** in intuition" (KRV B151) in light of its role in the B-Deduction as the faculty which ensures the objective reality of its synthetic unity. This definition rather seems to better encapsulate the role of imagination in the A-Deduction, where I have suggested it is the faculty of spontaneous mental activity in general.

⁶⁵ Hereafter abbreviated as OUS. Included in the collection of essays by Henrich edited by Richard L. Velkley, *The Unity of Reason*. Harvard, 1994. References to page numbers are to this edition.

the passage of the common root within the context of Kant's rejection of 18th century faculty psychology, and secondly by trying to demonstrate how Kant's general position in the first *Critique* necessitates seeing the common root as in principle inaccessible, something outside or beyond the scope of human knowledge, which must remain forever obscure to us.

First the historical claim. Henrich says that the "passage on the common root does not point forward but refers back to the controversies of the eighteenth century concerning the system of psychology and its ontological presuppositions."⁶⁶ He has in mind Kant's rejection of Wolffian psychology which tries to discover a "basic power" within the soul which grounds all other powers or psychological faculties. This project is a consequence of Wolff's appropriation of Leibnizian ontology. As Henrich says, Wolff's "reduction of the powers of the faculty of knowledge to one basic power was not motivated by reasons that lie in the structure of the subject itself. Rather, those reasons stem from his attempt to turn the Leibnizian concept of substance into the foundation of a systematic psychology."⁶⁷ Henrich shows that Kant took over Crusius' criticisms of this idea of a basic power. Firstly, according to Crusius and thus Kant, the idea rests on an incorrect definition of power. To identify a substance as possessing a "power" is merely to describe the relation of an accident to the substance in which it inheres, the "power" merely identifies the "possibility of an effect" of the substance. Secondly, to identify the soul's basic power, as Wolff does, as the *vis repraesentativa universi*, the ability of the soul to represent the world to itself, is merely to give a "common title" to the soul's various representative powers, to abstract their common factor. This procedure is

⁶⁶ OUS, 21.

⁶⁷ OUS, 21-22.

essentially empty and semantic, as it would be if one were to try to account for the various kinetic properties of matter by identifying the basic power of matter as “the moving power”. To reduce the soul’s powers of perception, imagination, memory, judgment etc. to the *vis repraesentativa universi* is not to *ground* them in the soul’s basic power but merely to give these various representative powers a common name. The real criterion of a basic power, in Henrich’s words, “is that it renders intelligible the powers it grounds, such that the powers can be deduced from the basic power.”⁶⁸ “By contrast to the merely abstracted general power, the basic power is that which constitutes something peculiar and different from other things ‘in a manner not due to our way of considering things’”.⁶⁹

It must be admitted that this historical background information is unassailable. What is less clear is that we must admit, as Henrich insists, that this is what Kant has in mind in the passage on the common root, that Kant in that passage is “referring back” to this position vis-à-vis Wolffian psychology which he considers refuted by Crusius. It remains uncertain if Kant’s reference to the common root which is “to us unknown” is a reference to the type of “basic power” sought by that project with its illegitimate ontological presuppositions and ambitions. In particular, this interpretation can make the “perhaps” of the common root passage seem odd in this context. If the description of the common root as “to us unknown” here is taken to refer to the fact that it is in principle inaccessible to us, rather than something as yet undiscovered, and this assertion is based on a principled rejection of the project of finding a “basic power”, why then does Kant suggest that the stems of cognition may “perhaps” arise from such a root after all?

⁶⁸ OUS, 20.

⁶⁹ OUS, 23; the embedded quotation is from Crusius.

Henrich explains this “perhaps” by the fact that for Kant the idea of a basic power of the soul, a unifying principle that reduces and explains the soul’s other various powers and faculties, can and must remain a purely *regulative* ideal. Kant believes that it is a “maxim of reason” to always seek unity among the plurality of phenomena, to seek the unitary principle that explains the phenomena, in this case the soul’s various powers, but that this fact about the nature of reason does not guarantee that it can in fact be found; it remains, he says, “purely hypothetical”. This is what causes Henrich to describe Kant’s counter-proposal as an “intrasubjective teleology” of the subject’s faculties which is “constituted of several mutually independent factors, contingent in their reciprocal relations.”⁷⁰ “[T]he joining of the cognitive powers can only be explained from some purposive arrangement; and yet the teleology is intrasubjective in that the purposiveness in question does not refer to given objects.”⁷¹ Even in denying the possibility of a positive knowledge of a fundamental and original ground of the subject’s cognitive capacities, and thus a unitary principle of theoretical reason, we can still conceive of the interplay of faculties as teleologically directed at the ideal of a perfect unity and simplicity. The unity of theoretical subjectivity can remain a regulative ideal, even though it can never be reached.

This idea is at play, as Henrich points out, in the argument of the Paralogisms, and its critique of rational psychology in the ontological tradition of Leibniz and Wolff. There Kant argues against the doctrines of rational psychology which maintain that we can know the soul as a simple, indestructible, persisting substance; the soul, that is, as it would be conceived as a basic power and ground of all theoretical powers. As I will

⁷⁰ OUS, 21.

⁷¹ OUS, 31.

discuss the Paralogisms in the next section, I will postpone for a moment remarking on the relevance of the arguments there for the matter at hand. But Henrich's appeal to them is connected with another Kantian theme which he uses to bolster his argument that the common root is in principle inaccessible. Henrich is keen to emphasize the dimension of Kant's thought which insists on certain regions of unavoidable obscurity or *Dunkelheiten*, in which reason's light, though it be part of reason's nature to try, can never penetrate.⁷² According to Henrich, the project of discovering the ground of subjectivity itself, and thus the unitary principle of theoretical reason, a project to which, allegedly, the very idea of identifying the common root purportedly belongs, is one such region. For Henrich's Kant, the unity of the subject is something to be amazed at, but something for which no explanation is possible, something which must always remain mysterious. The project of the *Critique* is after all about surveying the limits of human reason, and the ground of the unity of subjectivity lies beyond these limits. Henrich says that the "'I', around which we 'can only revolve in a perpetual circle' (A346/B404), cannot get outside itself and reach the ground of its own possibility."⁷³ In connection with this, Henrich also mentions Kant's remark in the *Anthropology*, already quoted above, about the problem of the heterogeneity of sensibility and understanding.⁷⁴ It is *prima facie* extremely difficult to see what it would mean for the common root to be the source of both sensibility and

⁷² This theme is present in the very first lines of the *Critique*. "Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason." KRV Avii.

⁷³ OUS, 30. He continues: "For in trying to get beyond their phenomenal diversity and reach the ground of their unity, one would have to look for such a unity in an area that pertains to the conditions of the possibility of self-consciousness. One would thus fall back into the first paradox of all self-knowledge." This latter remark draws on Henrich's work on self-consciousness and on reflective theories of subjectivity. This work will come up again in the discussion of Fichte, particularly Henrich's seminal essay, "Fichte's Original Insight."

⁷⁴ "We cannot conceive how things so dissimilar could have sprung from one and the same source."

understanding, given that the former is a faculty of receptivity and the latter one of spontaneity. Henrich, in regards to both these points, asserts then that the common root, the ground of theoretical reason, can *only* be thought of, in anticipation of the direction Fichte and Hegel will take, as an object of *intellectual intuition*, which Kant explicitly denies of human subjectivity. Thus, Henrich claims, considering both his story of the historical background of the common root passage, and his situation of the common root within the region of Kantian *Dunkelheiten*, that the “speculative Idealists no longer saw the background of what to them seemed inadequate in Kant’s work...they no longer considered it meaningful to be amazed at the origin and unity of consciousness.”⁷⁵

So for Henrich the common root passage is far from a hopeful announcement of a further task for Critical philosophy, but rather a retrospective renunciation of a project of 18th century psychology, and a pre-emptive warning about the limits of human reason’s capacity to determine the grounds of its own possibility. I’ve suggested that we can remain skeptical about the former point. Kant no doubt rejects the idea of a “basic power” in the Wolffian sense—Kant’s rejection of the Leibnizian ontology underlying and motivating it makes this clear—but it’s not thereby definitively been decided that the idea of a common root of understanding and sensibility must take this form. What *can*, I think, be ascertained in a positive sense from Kant’s appropriation of the Crusius objection to the idea of a basic power is the actual criterion for determining the common root, namely, that it “must render intelligible the powers [or faculties] it grounds”. It must be shown how the derivative faculties can be derived from the common root as their source. This puts a pressure on any account of the common root, and gives a condition

⁷⁵ OUS, 33.

for its success, but this project itself has not been shown to be impossible.⁷⁶ At best what has been shown is that the common root cannot be understood as the “basic power” in the Wolffian sense.

As regards the second point, it must of course be admitted that maintaining the boundary of human reason, and upholding the sense of amazement at the *Dunkelheiten* that lie beyond it is a definite Kantian theme, and Henrich is right to emphasize it. But again it is not clear that the common root must necessarily belong to it. Henrich says that the “question of the basic power of sensibility and understanding concerns not the structure of subjectivity but the conditions of the possibility of such a structure.”⁷⁷ But why is this? If we read “basic power” here not in the objectionable Wolffian sense, but rather in the sense of a common root which fulfills the criterion mentioned above, then it seems that all that is going on is an expansion and simplification of our conception of the structure of subjectivity, not an attempt to give the conditions of the possibility of the structure itself. The project would leave the limit intact, just pushing it one step back, as it were. Even if it could be shown how sensibility and understanding originate in some way in a common root—imagination, say—it still could remain an intractable mystery *how* this imagination is *itself* possible. The question of *why* human subjectivity must be grounded in the self-activity of imagination would not thereby be answered. Rather, the idea of the common root seems precisely, or at least can seem so depending on how it is conceived, like an issue about the *structure* of subjectivity itself, and not necessarily anything beyond that. Henrich perhaps identifies the project of a common root with an attempt to go beyond the limits of reason, to go beyond the necessary transcendental

⁷⁶ And, as we will see, this is a very close approximation of Heidegger’s strategy in the Kantbook.

⁷⁷ OUS, 32.

structure of subjectivity toward the conditions of the possibility of the structure, because he sees the common root as necessarily an object of *intellectual intuition*, as indeed the Idealists did or tended to.⁷⁸ But it has not been shown that the common root can only be known by, or indeed identical with, a faculty of intellectual intuition, especially in Kant's sense of the term. The project of locating the common root outside of a faculty of "intellectual intuition" in Kant's sense, as, for instance, both the Idealists and Heidegger do, is kept open as a possibility. Henrich himself seems to acknowledge these points when he admits that Heidegger "explicitly distinguishes his attempt from the construction of a basic faculty that was at issue in the historical interpretation. The interpretation of imagination as the common root [offered by him] is not about the reduction of the given structure of cognition to some simple basic underlying powers but solely the development of that structure itself."⁷⁹

c) The Metaphysics of Subjectivity

Henrich mentions the section on the Paralogisms in the context of his argument that any attempt to investigate the common root or the ground of the unity of subjectivity must remain futile, or at least involves retreating from the territory of critical philosophy toward a pre-critical metaphysics. Kant does not just remain agnostic about the possibility of identifying the common root, he "renounces" the possibility. The common root remains relegated to the region of *Dunkelheiten*, outside the limits of human reason's capabilities. Indeed Henrich says this section is essential for grasping this position: "The

⁷⁸ Though as we will see in part two, Fichte's conception of "intellectual intuition" is *different* than Kant's.

⁷⁹ OUS, 34.

critique of the paralogisms thus *first provides* the possibility of understanding Kant's arguments for the unknowability of the common root of sensibility and understanding."⁸⁰

I want to pause here a moment to evaluate the relevance of the Paralogisms for our discussion regarding the ground of the unity of subjectivity, and in particular the issue of the common root.⁸¹

It should be kept in mind, as Henrich himself highlights, that the Paralogisms are first and foremost a critique of the claims of traditional metaphysics of the Leibniz-Wolff variety, specifically with that part of it which Kant identifies as the "rational doctrine of the soul" or "rational psychology". Essentially, the section on the Paralogisms asks the question, "what *use* can the principle of apperception, the 'I think', have for extending our cognition or our knowledge regarding the subject, or the ground of the unity of the subject?" In a word, the answer is "none". All the claims of rational psychology—that we can know that the soul is a substance, simple, identical through time, and distinct from body—are based on dialectical, illusory, and thus false, inferences.

Now, based on what has been said so far, we have cause already to be suspicious of the status of the Paralogisms as a definitive dismissal of the notion of the common root. If my attempt to show that the common root can still have a meaning outside of the traditional notion of a basic power inhering in the soul as substance has succeeded, then the critique of the paralogisms may be beside the point. In this context, they can prove at best that the common root cannot be understood as such a basic power. But putting aside this initial cause for skepticism, I want to press on a bit because I think the Paralogisms

⁸⁰ OUS, 29; my emphases.

⁸¹ For a recent but classic discussion of the Paralogisms, see Ameriks' *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*. New Edition. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000.

can also be useful in sharpening my interpretation of the type of project the Idealists and Heidegger are engaging in after Kant.

Rational psychology, Kant says, is an attempt to derive knowledge of the nature of the soul from the “sole text” of the principle of apperception, the ‘I think’.⁸² The ‘I think’ according to Kant *does* serve to “distinguish two kinds of objects through the nature of our power of representation.”⁸³ The ‘I’ as an *object* of inner sense is called the soul, and as an *object* of outer sense is called body. The soul is the object of inner sense, the empirical I, that is, the soul as it is in appearance. Now, the rational doctrine of the soul makes the further claims that we can determine that the soul is a substance, in which all thinking inheres, that it is simple, numerically identical and enduring through time, etc. We need not rehearse here the specific arguments that rational psychology marshals for these conclusions, but in each case, the soul is purportedly being determined as a *supersensible object*. The critique of the paralogisms essentially reminds us that all cognition for Kant, that is, all determination of an object, requires an intuition, but we can have no intuition of the soul, nor of its simplicity, endurance, etc. The determination of the soul as a supersensible object, or this “I, or he, or it (the thing), which thinks”⁸⁴, as Kant famously puts it, remains a task outside the capacities of human reason, beyond the limits of reason’s self-knowledge.

It should be mentioned that Kant insists that there is a formal, though *merely* formal, validity to the claims of the paralogisms. I must think myself as substance, in the sense that I as subject cannot be used as the determination of another thing, or that I am simple,

⁸² KRV A343/B401.

⁸³ KRV A342/B400.

⁸⁴ KRV A346/B404.

in the sense that my self-representation does not contain manifoldness, etc. But these merely logical, even tautological, statements can never have objective reality, because the latter would require an intuition which we never have. The logically valid claims of the paralogisms, Kant says, have no *use* in proving the “usual conclusions” of rational psychology, because they are powerless in determining the thinking being *as an object* to which these predicates can be applied.

Now, this hints at a subtle ambiguity at work throughout the section on the Paralogisms. On the one hand, Kant seems to be drawing on an analogy with what was said in the Transcendental Analytic about cognition of external objects. There we were directed to recognize that objective experience of an object, that is, the representation of a sensible manifold unified in accordance with the categories—i.e. unified under the concept of an object in general (transcendental object=x)—is the representation of the object only in appearance. We have no knowledge of the object as noumenal, either in the negative sense (the object abstracted from all subjective conditions of thinking), or in the positive sense (the intelligible object of a non-sensible intuition). Sometimes it seems as if the paralogisms, insofar as they putatively determine the nature of the soul, are illusory for the same reasons. They make claims about the metaphysical nature of the “thinking being [*das denkende Wesen*]” as noumenon, abstracted from the conditions of sensible intuition. The soul is an object of inner sense, but as such merely an appearance. We cannot apply any real predicates or attributes to the thinking being “as it is in itself”, the supersensible substratum of the soul, precisely because it is a *noumenal* “object”.

In other words, the illusion of the paralogisms consists in attempting to determine the nature of the thinking being, *the ‘I’*, abstracted from the conditions of sensible intuition

(in this case *inner* sense). Seen in this light, the lesson of the Paralogisms is that we cannot ascribe any predicates to the *noumenal self*—the “subject” of the ‘I think’, the thinking *thing*—for the very same reasons we cannot ascribe predicates to *any noumenal “object”*. On the other hand, Kant also says things to suggest that the error of rational psychology consists precisely in the tendency to “look underneath” the ‘I think’ at all, to treat it analogously to an *object* to which predicates can determinately be applied. Kant calls this the *hypostatization* of the ‘I think’. “One can place all **illusion** in the taking of a **subjective** condition of thinking for the cognition of an **object**.”⁸⁵ The paralogistic inferences represent the “subreption of hypostatized consciousness.”⁸⁶

Highlighting this line of thought tends to throw the very *intelligibility* of the former diagnosis of the paralogisms under suspicion. It is not *just* that rational psychology’s attempt to determine the noumenal self must fail because it is an attempt to determine a noumenal object *qua noumenal*, it’s that it must fail because it is an attempt to determine the self *as an object*. In this context, the very idea of a *noumenal self* can come to seem suspect. Whatever one thinks about the intelligibility of the concept of “noumena”, or however problematic one considers it, there is an *asymmetry* that must be admitted between the purported “noumenal *self*” and any other “noumenal *object*”, however that is to be understood. If we understand noumena in the negative sense, for instance, as objects—ordinary, empirical objects, e.g.—abstracted from the subjective, transcendental conditions for knowing them, that is, the conditions of *empirical* thought in general, this possesses a *kind* of intelligibility simply lacking in the case of the noumenal self.

Understood the same way, asking about the nature of the noumenal *self*, the self-in-itself,

⁸⁵ KRV A396.

⁸⁶ KRV A403.

would entail thinking about the nature of an “object” abstracted from all subjective, transcendental conditions for knowing it, when the putative “object” in question—the self—is *defined* by an activity which is subject to those conditions; the conditions are conditions *of the activity* to begin with. There is a kind of self-destructiveness here that is not present in the former case. In the first case—in trying to conceive of the thing-in-itself, of what such a thing could mean—I can interpret what I’m asking for in the following way: I can try to imagine what the object is like, or would be like, independently of me or my way of thinking of it, in other words, how it would be if I, or anyone, weren’t around. In the latter case, I am essentially trying to imagine what *I* am like independently of *me*, what *I* would be like if *I* weren’t around. For Kant, as we have seen, *to be an ‘I’*—or at least to be a theoretical subject—is to unify a manifold of representations under the condition of the unity of apperception. Now to think of a noumenal object then is to abstract from this condition, and to think it outside its relation to this condition. But how can I now even *think* of the I “in itself” at all, if the “I in itself” is to be conceived along the lines of the “thing in itself”, that is, abstracted from the very conditions that constitute I-hood? In this case, the alleged analogy upon which the *former* diagnosis of the paralogisms rests simply doesn’t hold.

This asymmetry suggests that rational psychology rests in fact on a kind of metaphysical category mistake. It suggests that *subjectivity*, that is, original synthetic activity, the unity of which is formally designated by the principle of apperception, ‘I think’, is a different category of being from *things* altogether. The mistake made by rational psychology is not *just* that it investigates the noumenal self *qua noumenal*, but that it treats the self (subjectivity) as something that can be treated *like an object at all* (a

determinable thing with determinate properties). Now, I called this an “ambiguity” in Kant’s argument because it is not always clear where he is locating the actual source of the error of the paralogisms. Consider the following passage:

From all this one sees that rational psychology has its origin in a mere misunderstanding. The unity of consciousness, which grounds the categories, is here taken for *an intuition of the subject as an object*, and the category of substance applied to it. But this unity is only of the unity of thinking, through which *no object is given*; and thus the category of substance, which always presupposes a given intuition, cannot be applied to it, and hence this subject *cannot be cognized at all*.⁸⁷

It is not entirely clear here if the “mere misunderstanding” is due to rational psychology’s allegedly finding an intuition where there in fact is none—that “no object *is given*”, that the subject “cannot be *cognized at all*”, *because* an intuition of it is lacking—or if the misunderstanding is due to the kind of category mistake I have hinted at—that “no *object is given*”, *because* the subject is simply something that can *never be* an object. The latter interpretation gets its clearest expression in the distinction Kant makes, present in both editions, between the *determining* self and the *determinable* self.

Now it is indeed very illuminating that I cannot cognize as an object itself that which I must presuppose in order to cognize an object at all; and that the determining self (the thinking) is different from the determinable self (the thinking subject) as cognition is different from its object.⁸⁸

All modi of self-consciousness in thinking are therefore not yet themselves concepts of the understanding of objects (categories), but mere functions, which provide thought with no object at all, and hence do not provide my self as an object to be cognized. It is not the consciousness of the **determining** self, but only that of the **determinable** self...that is the **object**.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ KRV B421-422, emphases mine; Kant himself emphasizes “thinking” and “intuition” in the last sentence.

⁸⁸ KRV A402.

⁸⁹ KRV B407.

In these passages, it seems evident that the paralogisms make a category mistake. The object to which the paralogisms illegitimately apply the properties of substantiality, simplicity, etc., is merely the determinable self, i.e. *the empirical self*, the object of inner sense, the soul in appearance. Now, the paralogisms do err in their putative attributions because they treat the soul as if it were an object in itself, and their claims lack objective reality. But the real error consists precisely in mistakingly locating the ‘I think’, the “sole text of rational psychology”, in the determinable self rather than in the determining self, i.e. *the thinking*. The determining self simply *is* the spontaneous synthetic activity of unifying an intuited manifold.

So, returning to our initial question about the relevance of the Paralogisms chapter for the search for the common root, that is, the ground of the unity of (theoretical) subjectivity, I have tried to argue that it *is* relevant, but not quite for the same reasons that Henrich advances. Henrich is right that the paralogisms belie the claims of rational psychology in the Leibniz-Wolff metaphysical tradition, and consequently, show the futility of investigating the nature of the soul, the self as a supersensible object. Thus the attempt to locate the common root in a basic power of the soul as substance is doomed to failure. But the Paralogisms section, in highlighting the distinction between the determining and determinable selves, also points to another way of approaching the question of the common root, of the ground of the unity of theoretical subjectivity, that is, through the nature of the *determining* self, the kind of spontaneous activity that can never be considered identical with a (determinable) object. The common root as a fundamental capacity would have to be located somehow within this activity itself. The critique of the paralogisms forbids, as it were, further investigation into the nature of the *thing* which

thinks [*das Ding, welches denkt*], and Henrich is right that the common root cannot be found somehow in the nature of *that* thing, but it leaves open further investigation into the nature of *the thinking* [*das Denken*] itself.

Seeking the ground of the unity of subjectivity needn't, as Henrich supposes, be confined to the region of Kantian *Dunkelheiten*. Kant asks in the Paralogisms section, "what *use* can the 'I think' have in extending our knowledge regarding the metaphysical nature of the subject?" If we, in the manner of the paralogisms, hypostatize the 'I think', and treat it as a determinable object with determinate properties, the answer is 'none'. The nature of the thinking being, "the thing which thinks", taken as the underlying supersensible substratum of thinking, must always lie outside of reason's capacity for self-knowledge (if it is intelligible at all). But if we instead focus our attention on the nature of the thinking itself, perhaps there is more to be said.

*Thinking, taken in itself, is merely the logical function and hence the sheer spontaneity of combining the manifold...in the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the **being itself** [*das Wesen selbst*], about which, however, nothing yet is thereby given to me for thinking. But the proposition 'I think', insofar as it says only that I exist thinking, is not a merely logical function, but rather determines the subject (which is then at the same time an object) in regard to existence, and this cannot take place without inner sense, whose intuition always makes available the object not as a thing in itself but merely as appearance.⁹⁰*

Properly speaking, the 'I think' of apperception is merely a formal principle of unity. It expresses the *act*, Kant says, of determining my existence.⁹¹ This act, the *thinking*, the determining self, is sheer spontaneous activity (bound by the conditions of sensible intuition) which determines itself in regard to its own existence as an empirical self. It is

⁹⁰ KRV B428-429, italics mine.

⁹¹ KRV B157fn.

this *self-determining activity* which gives subjectivity its unique ontological character.⁹²

To repeat the quote from the *Anthropology*, “the fact that the human being can have the ‘I’ in his representations [that is, expresses its self-activity through the ‘I think’ as the principle of the unity of that self-activity] raises him infinitely above all other living beings...through rank and dignity an entirely different being from *things*.”

For Kant, this self-determining spontaneous activity is a kind of basic fact of human subjectivity. But it is a fact which lies at the heart of the so-called Copernican Revolution which inaugurates transcendental philosophy. It must be remembered that the Copernican Revolution is a revolution *within metaphysics*. Kant’s task in the first *Critique* is to set metaphysics on the secure path of a science. The revolution requires not a rejection of metaphysics per se but a “change in our ways of thinking”⁹³, an “altered method of our way of thinking”⁹⁴ with regard to metaphysics. He says that the concern of the first *Critique* is “to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics.”⁹⁵ To be sure, and as we have seen, this transformation does require a rejection of the procedures of the speculative metaphysics in the Leibniz-Wolff tradition. But it is clear from the second edition preface, at least, that Kant’s intent is to substitute another system of metaphysics in its place. He says that the critique is not the system itself but merely a “treatise on the

⁹² Of course in the case of theoretical reason, the self-determination does not go all the way down, but is always limited by sensible intuition. Kant highlights this in the section on the “transition from rational psychology to cosmology”, from which the previous quote is taken. There he begins to contrast theoretical reason with practical reason, which has a “spontaneity through which our actuality is determinable without the need of conditions of empirical intuition.” The former spontaneity signals the finitude of finite human subjectivity, which as we will see, the Idealists perhaps lose sight of. But we can see here how the Idealists’ focus on spontaneous activity will be brought to bear on the problem of the unity of theoretical and practical reason. The unconditioned spontaneity of practical reason becomes the model of human reason *tout court*, and incorporated into the picture of theoretical reason.

⁹³ KRV Bxvi.

⁹⁴ KRV Bxviii.

⁹⁵ KRV Bxxii.

method” of the new science. “The future system of metaphysics” prescribed by the *Critique* was offered as a plan to be carried out.

Kant himself sees the new system as consisting of two parts, the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals, both of which Kant himself produces in one form or another. Metaphysics as Kant describes it, at least in the preface, is the elaboration of what is *a priori* in reason’s relationship to its object.

Insofar as there is to be reason in these sciences, something in them must be cognized *a priori*, and this cognition can relate to its object in either of two ways, either merely **determining** the object and its concept (which must be given from elsewhere), or else also **making** the object **actual**. The former is **theoretical**, the latter **practical** cognition of reason.⁹⁶

Kant’s actual description of the Copernican Revolution involves a shift in our assumptions. “Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects...let us once try whether we do not get further with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition.”⁹⁷ Transcendental philosophy is a systematic elaboration of the *a priori* subjective conditions of theoretical and practical cognition. As we have seen, the fundamental such condition elaborated in the first *Critique* is the spontaneous self-activity which is the *a priori* ground of all empirical cognition—both of the empirical self and of objects of outer sense—and, though we have not yet discussed it, of the moral law. It is the systematic elaboration of this self-determining activity that, I am claiming, will be a major concern of the Idealists and Heidegger. They are impressed with the idea that it is this feature of subjectivity which makes it metaphysically *sui generis*. They are concerned with the *metaphysical import* of the Copernican Revolution vis-à-vis subjectivity itself. For them, the fact that

⁹⁶ KRV Bix-x.

⁹⁷ KRV Bxvi.

the spontaneous self-activity of subjectivity lies at the ground of reason's theoretical and practical cognition is a metaphysical claim, in need of metaphysical elaboration. The Copernican Revolution requires a re-imagination of what metaphysics is. The pure self-determining activity of subjectivity, the feature which makes subjectivity metaphysically *sui generis*, is taken to be the starting point of the post-revolutionary metaphysics.

In essence then, they attempt to construct a *metaphysics of subjectivity* which is to stand alongside the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals as part of the promised “future system of metaphysics”⁹⁸. In this way they see it as the fulfillment of the Kantian project. Indeed, as they conceive it, the metaphysics of subjectivity does not just “stand alongside” the others, but acts as the unifying link between them, the ultimate fulfillment of the *promise* of the Copernican Revolution. As we will see in the following section, one can perceive a problem with the coherence of the theoretical and the practical standing together as a unified science. The metaphysics of subjectivity is seen as a necessary *means* of explaining the unity between them, as a means of solving the “problem” of the unity of reason, and of directly answering Kant's question which stands as the ultimate goal of philosophy, “what is the human being?” In this way, the task of finding the unity of theoretical subjectivity via the common root is linked to the task of finding the unity of subjectivity in general, both as theoretical and practical subjectivity.

⁹⁸ KRV Bxxxvi.

3) The Unity of the Theoretical and the Practical Subject

a) The Unity of Reason's Demands and the Unified Subject

I now want to address the problem of the unity of subjectivity as a whole, or what has come to be known as the problem of the “unity of reason”, i.e. the unity of the faculties of theoretical reason and practical reason. Ultimately, the question for the Idealists and Heidegger will be how the metaphysics of subjectivity which they see as necessitated by the problem of the unity of *theoretical* subjectivity can be brought to bear on understanding the relationship between theoretical *and* practical rationality. How is the alleged metaphysics of subjectivity itself to act as a unifying link between theoretical cognition and practical activity? First we have to understand what this “problem” is, how Kant himself understood it and how he attempted to resolve it. Kant writes in the preface to the second *Critique*:

When it is a matter of determining a particular faculty of the human soul as to its sources, its contents, and its limits, then, from the nature of human cognition, one can begin only with its *parts*, with an accurate and complete presentation of them...But there is a second thing to be attended to, which is more philosophic and *architectonic*: namely to grasp correctly the idea of the whole and from this idea to see all those parts in their mutual relation by means of their derivation from the concept of that whole in a pure rational faculty.⁹⁹

He goes on to remark:

In this way the a priori principles of two faculties of the mind, the faculty of cognition and that of desire, would be found and determined as to the conditions, extent, and boundaries of their use, and a firm basis would thereby be laid for a scientific system of philosophy, both theoretical and practical.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ KPV, 5:10.

¹⁰⁰ KPV, 5:12.

Kant, of course, dedicates two critiques to the “parts” of the pure rational faculty, i.e. the faculties of cognition and desire, respectively. To what extent do these two taken together “attend to the second thing”, that is, as he says, the genuinely philosophical task of understanding their mutual relation and derivation from the concept of the whole, that is, the concept of *the whole human being* (qua rational being)? How far has Kant gone in laying the foundation for the whole “scientific system of philosophy”, as he calls it?

At the outset, it is interesting to note the dissimilarity between Kant’s attitudes regarding *this* project and the one we’ve already discussed, namely that of finding a common root which would unify our concept of the theoretical subject. Kant’s attitude regarding the latter is, as we have seen, ambiguous: the two stems of theoretical cognition may *perhaps* originate in common root, which is nevertheless *unknown* to us. I have argued in the previous section that the project of finding such a root remains open, even on Kantian grounds. But Kant himself never seems to be interested in bringing this project to fulfillment. His attitude toward the problem of the “unity of reason” however is very different. Indeed, as the above quote indicates, it can be seen as a recurring theme which informs the entire development of the Critical philosophy. And in contrast to the pessimism Kant seems to exhibit with regard to the common root, he remains throughout his works expressly hopeful about the possibility of arriving at a principle of the unity of reason. In the “Critical Elucidation of the Analytic” of the second *Critique*, he says that the propositions presented there “rightly occasion the expectation of perhaps being able

some day to attain insight into the unity of the whole rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical) and to derive everything from one principle.”¹⁰¹

But why is the problem of the unity of reason a problem to begin with? Why would we not be content with two separate analyses of the “sources, contents, and limits” of two distinct human faculties, the faculty for attaining theoretical knowledge of the world, and the faculty for acting within the world? Wouldn’t this be enough to give us a picture of the world and the human being within it, both as a cognitive subject possessing knowledge about the world and as a practical agent within it? What exactly are we asking for when we ask for or expect a *unified* account of the human being beyond an analysis of its two special faculties?

There are *two* separate but closely related reasons why the problem of the unity of reason is a problem—and therefore two reasons why the Kantian dualism between theoretical and practical reason can appear troubling—generated by two separate concerns or sets of concerns. The first concern requires that there be unity within our *world-conception*, the second that there be unity in our *self-conception*. The first is more familiar: there seems to be a threatening inconsistency between the pictures of the *world* that theoretical reason and practical reason respectively yield. A clearer, and perhaps more Kantian, way of putting this is the question of the consistency and coherence between the respective *demands* that theoretical and practical reason make on the world. Theoretical reason culminates in the concept of nature, practical reason in the concept of human freedom. Kant thus prefers to speak of the putatively singular (pure) rational faculty as having two separate *uses*, and thus as operating according to two separate

¹⁰¹ KPV, 5:91. He immediately goes on to describe the search for this hoped-for derivation as guided by a “undeniable need of human reason, which finds complete satisfaction only in a complete systematic unity of its cognitions.”

interests. And because (pure) reason always operates according to a priori principles, that is, according to laws that it itself legislates, Kant speaks of reason as having legislative power over two separate *domains*¹⁰². Kant writes,

Now the legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom, and thus contains the natural law as well as the moral law, initially in two separate systems but ultimately in a single philosophical system. The philosophy of nature pertains to everything that **is**; that of morals only to that which **should be**.¹⁰³

Because reason legislates over two separate domains, it makes two separate *demands* on these domains. As a faculty of cognition, reason demands that the world of experience possess a certain kind of unity, one consistent with a robust concept of nature, in which every event is determined by “natural mechanism” within a finite, simple and closed system of empirically discoverable causal laws. As a faculty of desire, reason demands the possibility of events resulting from the causality of freedom, which is a requirement of truly moral action out of respect for the moral law. In this context the problem of the unity of reason requires an account of how these two demands of reason are to be *simultaneously satisfied*. In other words, we can understand the desideratum of a unified account of reason as a call for a *single account of the world* in which both of reason’s demands are satisfied, an account of the world in which reason’s concept of nature and concept of freedom co-exist, and in which its legislations coincide and harmonize, and don’t contradict one another.

The second reason that I think the problem of the unity of reason can be seen as a problem is perhaps less familiar, but I will argue that it is equally troublesome. This reason does not focus on the problem of the consistency between the pictures of the *world*

¹⁰² See KU, 5:174-5.

¹⁰³ KRV A840/B868.

that theoretical and practical reason respectively require, but rather on the coherence of the pictures of the *subject* that they respectively generate. There is an ambiguity here. In some sense this can be taken as simply a special case of the first concern. After all, the human being, as a natural being, is to be included within the concept of nature. So to ask about the unity of reason is also to ask about how we are to understand a being who is at once a part of nature—whose behavior or actions, as natural processes and events, are thus thoroughly determined by natural mechanism—and *also* in possession of the kind of freedom morality requires, who is capable, in other words, of autonomy. But this is as it were to ask the question as it were wholly from the *third* person: how can this being, the human being, be both part of nature and also free? But we can also ask it from the *first* person, either singular or plural. This, I believe, changes the import of the question and perhaps adds a new desideratum to any proposed solution to the problem. Theoretical and practical reason are, after all, faculties that I, or we, as rational beings, possess. They are supposed to be *my* (or *our*) faculties. Since they are *our* faculties of theoretical and practical reason, they give us not only pictures of, and an understanding of, the world—which we human beings are a “part” of—according to the demands they (and thus we) make on the world, they also give us a picture and understanding of *ourselves* (and hopefully, then, a picture of how we fit into that world). To frame the problem of the unity of reason in this way is to ask for or require a unified account of our subjectivity—as both cognitive subjects and as practical agents—such that this bifurcation is intelligible to us as belonging to *our* (unified) subjectivity.

So there are *three* schisms which a putative solution to the problem of the unity of reason may address, and thus three dualisms which it might attempt to reconcile. They are:

- 1) the dualism between the world conceived of as a natural world and conceived of as a “*moral world*”—which means a world admitting of, amenable or even conducive to moral interest and concern
- 2) the “dual identity” of the subject (a being with subjectivity) as a part of the world—the subject as a natural being and as a moral agent
- 3) the dual capacity of a human being (a being with subjectivity) to both know the world and to act within it.

More concisely put, these three dualisms are those between:

- 1) the *natural world-order* and the *moral world-order*
- 2) the human being as a *natural being* and the human being as a *moral agent*
- 3) the human being as a *knower* and the human being as a *doer*.

How do these two problems—those of the unity of world-conception and the unity of self-conception—and thus these three dualisms, relate to each other? In what follows I will trace the development of Kant’s engagement with the problem of the unity of reason, and the various attempts he makes to solve it. In anticipation, Kant in general has three strategies for attacking the problem, describable in terms of three more or less familiar “doctrines”: the doctrine of the “highest good” (grounded in the idea of God as moral author of the natural world); the doctrine of the “double character of the I” (as a special application to subjects of the general claim that all things have both an empirical and intelligible character); and the doctrine that “beauty is the symbol of morality”. As we will see, these strategies loosely map onto the three senses of dualism just mentioned.¹⁰⁴

Ultimately I will argue then that though at various stages Kant seems sensitive to each of the respective dualisms, a satisfactory solution to the second set of concerns—regarding

¹⁰⁴ Though as we will see as well, if the doctrine of the double character of the I is supplemented with the doctrine regarding the “primacy of the practical”, the general strategy seems to extend from the second to the third dualism.

our self-conception, and in particular in reference to the third dualism—is lacking. This is to say that while he attempts to show both the possibility of the harmony between the natural and moral world-orders, and the consistency and mutual dependence of the faculties of cognition and desire as pure rational faculties, he fails to illuminate the unity of the subject itself as both knower and doer, and thus to clarify the deeper affinity between the subject’s own cognitive and practical activities.

b) The “Transition” from Theoretical to Practical Reason

I want now to take a closer look at how the problem of the unity of reason arises in Kant’s works, and the course of his engagement with it. I have remarked that we may see this engagement as a guiding thread throughout the development of the Critical Philosophy. It is a familiar fact that Kant did not begin the *Critique of Pure Reason* with the intention that it would be the first of three such critiques, nor did he have this tripartite division in mind even after he felt the need to add a second critique to the first. Kant insists, as we have seen, even in the second edition of the first *Critique*, that it is only a “treatise on the method, not a system of the science itself”. Presumably, he intended to elaborate this “future system of metaphysics” directly in the form of a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of morals. But the first *Critique* is also supposed to at least provide a hint as to how the concepts of nature and freedom are to be related and unified in the “scientific system of philosophy”. He says in the beginning of the Dialectic that “*perhaps* the [transcendental] ideas make possible a *transition* [*Übergang*] from concepts of nature to the practical, and themselves generate support for

the moral ideas and connection [*Zusammenhang*] with the speculative cognitions of reason. About all this we must expect to be informed in due course.”¹⁰⁵

Of course, by the time he was preparing the second edition, Kant had already completed his *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*. In the preface to that work, Kant explains that it is precisely its failure to provide such a solution to the problem of the unity of reason that disqualifies it for the title of a critique of pure practical reason. He requires, he says there, that such a critique, “if it is to be carried through completely, be able at the same time to present the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle, since there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application.”¹⁰⁶ But when Kant writes such a critique soon afterwards, he seems to have backed away from such a strict requirement. As quoted earlier, he credits it with, at best, “occasioning the expectation of perhaps being able some day to attain insight into” the unity of reason. It is likely that one of the reasons Kant was motivated to produce yet another critique, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, was precisely the “insight” he believed it provided into the relationship between theoretical and practical reason. He writes in the published introduction to that work that it is the faculty of the power of judgment which “provides the mediating concept between the concepts of nature and the concept of freedom, which makes possible the transition [*Übergang*] from the purely theoretical to the purely practical,

¹⁰⁵ KRV A329/B385-6, my emphases.

¹⁰⁶ GMS 4:392. Grounding the two uses of reason in a common “principle” might represent yet another sense in which the problem of the unity of reason might be resolved, but if so, it would seem to refer more to the set of concerns dealing with *systematicity*, which I have said I am bracketing here.

from lawfulness in accordance with the former to the final end in accordance with the latter, in the concept of a purposiveness of nature.”¹⁰⁷

Notice that the passages I have been quoting oscillate between talk of finding a “common principle”, which would unify the concepts of nature and freedom in a single philosophical system, and talk of a “transition” from one concept to the other. It’s not clear at the outset what the relationship between these two desiderata is. I want to bracket at the moment the issue of how seriously Kant takes the possibility of providing a “common principle”—which would presumably be the task of the “future system of metaphysics”, which it is not clear Kant ever provided or even in the end thought possible—and focus instead on how Kant ultimately construes the “transition” from nature to freedom. In doing so, I want to elaborate Kant’s considered position on the relationship between the two faculties of cognition and desire.

Interestingly, as I’ve already mentioned, Kant’s own usage of the phrase “unity of reason” in the first *Critique* doesn’t quite match the issue with which we are concerned here¹⁰⁸. There, Kant is mainly concerned with the relationship between the understanding and reason *in its theoretical use*, that is, with the unity between the two faculties considered as faculties *of cognition*. In the first *Critique* Kant defines reason as the faculty of principles, whose function is to give unity to the rules of the understanding.

If the understanding may be a faculty of the unity of appearances by means of rules, then reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Thus it never applies directly to experience or to any object, but instead applies to the understanding, in order to give unity *a priori* through concepts to the understanding’s manifold cognitions, which may be called “the unity of reason”.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ KU, 5:196

¹⁰⁸ See footnote 14 above; I believe this holds not only for the first *Critique* but for the others as well.

¹⁰⁹ KRV A302/B359.

So the unity of reason is not to be understood as the unity *within* reason as a whole, i.e. the unity between its theoretical and practical functions or *uses*, but rather the type of unity which reason in its merely theoretical use *brings* about, the unity of the rules of the understanding which themselves are responsible for bringing about the unity of *experience*.¹¹⁰ If the understanding by itself provides for the concept of the unity of *experience*, then, reason alone can provide for a genuine concept of *nature*, that is, a system of possible appearances governed by a finite number of empirically discoverable laws, in other words, the type of unity which makes possible natural-scientific activity. That is, reason in its theoretical use—which, as Kant is mainly concerned to emphasize, means the *regulative* employment of reason’s “transcendental ideas”—first gives us the concept of *nature*.

But it is these very transcendental ideas that, Kant says, also “perhaps make possible a transition from concepts of nature to the practical”, about which we must “expect to be informed in due course.”¹¹¹ It’s not very clear when we are in fact informed about this. We may perhaps look to the section where Kant introduces the regulativity of the principles of reason as a resolution of the antinomies which are associated with the cosmological ideas. One such idea of course is the idea of transcendental freedom. Kant defines freedom there as “the faculty of beginning a state from itself”, that is, a faculty of empirically unconditioned causation; he says that “reason creates the idea of a *spontaneity*, which could start to act from itself, without needing to be preceded by any other cause that in turn determines it to action according to the law of causal

¹¹⁰ “The unity of reason is therefore not the unity of a possible experience, but is essentially different than that, which is the unity of understanding.” KRV A307/B363.

¹¹¹ KRV A329/B385-6.

connection.”¹¹² As is the case with all the antinomies, Kant marshals in the doctrine of transcendental idealism, in particular the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, in order to resolve the problem of the apparent contradiction between natural causation and causation through freedom, in other words, between nature and freedom itself. Here the central question is framed in terms of the “possibility” of freedom, which seems to be ruled out by the conception of nature which Kant has developed.

[T]he difficulty we encounter in the question about nature and freedom is only whether freedom is possible anywhere at all, and if it is, whether it can exist together with the universality of the natural law of causality, hence whether it is a correct disjunctive proposition that every effect in the world must arise **either** from nature **or** freedom, or whether instead **both**, each in a different relation, might be able to take place simultaneously in one and the same occurrence.¹¹³

It is here that Kant introduces the notion of the “double aspect” character of objects of sense. All objects of sense have both an *empirical* and an *intelligible* character. As appearances, all objects of sense have an empirical character according to which its actions are fully intelligible according to and determined by natural laws. But considered as things in themselves, abstracted from all sensible conditions, they also possess an intelligible character according to which they are capable of a causality through freedom, the effects of which are nevertheless sensible and detectable as appearances. Because all appearances have an intelligible ground, we are able to think of all events as being the effects of both natural-mechanistic causality and causality through freedom. Now the most interesting of such events of course would be human actions.

¹¹² KRV A533/B561; my emphasis. We might wonder what the relationship is supposed to be between *this* spontaneity and the spontaneity which is responsible, say, for originary synthesis associated with pure apperception. This latter spontaneity did not seem to be “relegated” to the status of a “mere” idea, but was rather accorded the status of the highest point of transcendental philosophy (see, e.g. B134fn.).

¹¹³ KRV A536/B564.

The human being is one of the appearances in the world of sense, and to that extent also one of the natural causes whose causality must stand under empirical laws. As such he must accordingly also have an empirical character, just like all other natural things... Yet the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, knows himself also through pure apperception, and indeed in actions and inner determinations which cannot be accounted at all among impressions of sense; he obviously is in one part phenomenon, but in another part, namely in regard to certain faculties, he is a merely intelligible object, because the actions of this object cannot at all be ascribed to the receptivity of sensibility.¹¹⁴

Kant immediately goes on to say that it is the concepts of reason, which possess an intelligible character unconstrained by natural necessity, which are the ground of all practical imperatives and of the *ought*. And it is reason that “with complete spontaneity...makes its own order according to ideas”, that is, the *moral* order of things. So we have here something resembling a “transition” to a practical employment of the ideas. Because human beings possess a double character, even though their actions are determined and fully explainable by natural necessity, i.e. have an empirical character, it remains possible that those *very same actions*, are *at the same time* the result of a non-natural causality, i.e. attributable to one’s intelligible character. But Kant, in summarizing his points here, insists that not even the *possibility* of freedom, let alone the reality of freedom, has been so far proven, but only that the concepts of nature and freedom do not contradict each other. But why does Kant say this? Why does not the existence of an intelligible character prove that non-natural causation, that is, causation through freedom, is at least possible? The answer can only be that we are dealing here still only with the theoretical use of reason. The resolution of the third antinomy shows only the unity between the understanding and reason in its theoretical use; the latter

¹¹⁴ KRV A546/B574; Here again it is suggested that the spontaneity of theoretical subjectivity—apperception—is ‘outside the order of nature’, and thus spontaneous in the robust sense of not being wholly empirically conditioned.

cannot even take an interest in the *possibility* of freedom. It is interesting to note in the quote above that Kant uses the spontaneity of *pure apperception* to indicate the intelligible character that may possess the faculty of causality through freedom which can create effects in the sensible world. Even though Kant seems to hint at an identity between the spontaneity of theoretical reason and the spontaneity involved in moral action, this is an identity which he is not entitled to, which he must be fully aware of.

It is not until the Canon that Kant addresses the issue of the unity of the theoretical and practical *uses* of reason. This is the second place, then, we should look within the first *Critique* for the “possibility of a transition” about which we can “expect to be informed”. The ideas affect the transition through being *employed* differently, that is, not for the sake of a picture of nature, and for the sake of the unity of our cognitive faculties in producing the coherence of such a picture, but rather for the sake of moral activity itself. “The final aim to which in the end the speculation of reason in its transcendental use is directed concerns three objects: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. With regard to all three the merely speculative interest of reason is very small”¹¹⁵, and, Kant goes on, essentially not worth the effort, because, from a theoretical point of view, they are *superfluous*. Theoretical reason’s only concern, after all, is “the investigation of nature”. Theoretical reason is sufficient in itself for this task; it has done its work in showing that the idea of a non-natural cause which has sensible effects does not contradict its own requirement that all events nevertheless must have natural causes.

In a word, these three propositions always remain transcendent for speculative reason, and have no immanent use, i.e. one that is permissible for objects of

¹¹⁵ A798/B826.

experience and therefore useful for us in some way, but are rather, considered in themselves, entirely idle even though extremely difficult efforts of our reason. If then, these cardinal propositions are not at all necessary for our **knowing**, and yet are insistently recommended to us by our reason, their importance must really concern only the **practical**.¹¹⁶

What is particularly interesting here is the claim which Kant goes on to make, namely the claim that from a purely practical point of view, *it doesn't matter* whether the will is free in the transcendental sense. This is a question for theoretical reason, a question in which theoretical reason itself actually takes very little interest. In its practical use, reason is only interested in adducing what the moral law *is*, that is, in adducing what ought to happen. Reason in its practical use only prescribes (practical) laws. *In itself*, qua *practical* reason, it is not concerned with whether what does happen is really in accordance with what ought to happen, or indeed if it is even possible that what happens in fact happen in accordance with what ought to happen. This is to say that practical reason's *sole* concern is the investigation of the moral law, a task for which it is sufficient in itself, and it has done its work when it has spelled this out.¹¹⁷

But whether in these actions, through which it prescribes laws, reason is not itself determined by further influences, and whether that which with respect to sensory impulses is called [practical] freedom might not in turn with regard to higher and more remote efficient causes be nature—in the practical sphere this does not concern us, since in the first instance we ask of reason only a **precept** for conduct; it is merely a speculative question, which we can set aside as long as our aim is directed toward action and omission. We thus cognize practical freedom through experience, as one of the natural causes, namely a causality of reason in the determination of the will, whereas transcendental freedom *requires an independence of this reason itself*...from all determining causes of the world of senses, and to this extent seems to be contrary to the law of nature, thus to all possible experience, and so remains a problem. *Yet this problem does not belong to reason in its practical use.*¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ KRV A799-800/B827-8.

¹¹⁷ It is from considerations like this that causes Kant in the first *Critique* to actually *exclude* moral philosophy from transcendental philosophy altogether. See KRV A801/B829fn.

¹¹⁸ KRV 803/B831, my emphases.

This puts the problem of the unity between the respective uses of reason in the starkest possible contrast. Reason in its strictly theoretical use is *only* concerned with producing the concept of nature, reason in its strictly practical use *only* with producing the moral law. This is to say that each respective use *creates a demand which it is fully capable of satisfying*. It is *self-sufficient* within its own sphere.

When Kant continues in the Canon by reducing all the interest of reason to the three questions—“what can I know?”, “what ought I to do?”, “what may I hope?”—the first two questions, he says, belong to the respective purviews of the theoretical and practical uses of reason. The first has just been answered in the first *Critique*, and the second first gets an answer in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, written between the first edition and the revised edition of the first *Critique*: my actions ought to be directed by the categorical imperative. It is only the last question, “what may I hope?”, which engages *both* of the uses of reason. Within the respective domains of each use of reason—that is, as long as reason focuses on one use and does not look to the other—reason has, Kant says, “cause to be content”. The problem, of course, and this is the main issue we are addressing here, is that reason cannot remain blindered or schizophrenic in this way for long. Reason is also interested in the *unity* of its respective uses in the theoretical and practical spheres. It is interested in both of its demands being simultaneously satisfied. It cannot ultimately rest content by bracketing out one of its interests for the sake of the other. Reason’s interests extend beyond merely answering the first two questions.

This is where Kant informs us of how the transcendental ideas offer the possibility of a transition from the theoretical to practical uses of reason. The respective uses of reason are united in the ideal of the *highest good*, or in the expectation, or hope, that nature has

its ground in a supreme intelligence, or moral author of the world, which will ensure that happiness is distributed in proportion to worthiness to be happy, in other words, moral worth.

I say, accordingly, that just as the moral principles are necessary in accordance with reason in its practical use, it is equally necessary to assume in accordance with reason in its theoretical use that everyone has cause to hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct, and the system of morality is therefore inseparably combined with the system of happiness, though only in the idea of pure reason.¹¹⁹

The picture of nature in which the theoretical use of reason culminated, driven by the regulative use of its transcendental ideas in ordering the rules of the understanding in accordance with its principles of unity, that is, the picture of the world as the “purposive unity of things” grounded in a supreme intelligence¹²⁰, now receives reinforcement through its connection with the moral demands that reason in its practical use exerts. It is this “systematic unity of ends”, Kant says finally, which “unifies practical with speculative reason.”¹²¹

The idea of God as moral author of the world—an idea necessitated by the interest reason takes, when its uses are unified, in the highest good—is the idea of the greatest unity and harmony between the concepts of nature and freedom. Kant also calls this the idea of a *highest reason*, because it is a reason in which all the demands of reason are *simultaneously satisfied*. This is why Kant calls it *self-sufficient reason* [*selbständige*

¹¹⁹ KRV A809/B837.

¹²⁰ “This highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the **purposive** unity of things, and the **speculative** interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordinance in the world as if it has sprouted from the intention of a highest reason. Such a principle, namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them. The presupposition of a supreme intelligence, as the sole cause of the world-whole, but of course, merely in the idea, can therefore always be useful to reason and never harmful to it.” KRV A6686-7/B714-5.

¹²¹ KRV A815/B843.

Vernunft], of which our reason is “only a weak copy”¹²². Our reason, as a whole, is *not*-self-sufficient because it *depends* on a rational belief in God as moral author and thus as guarantor of the highest good for the complete satisfaction of its rational demands.

Following Kant’s language in the Canon, I spoke of reason in its strictly practical use as only concerned with answering the question what the human being ought to do, that is, as solely concerned with the moral law itself. Of course, this might have seemed strange, because it would seem that we have a practical interest not just in what the moral law is, not just in *knowing* what we ought to do, but also in acting according to that law, in actually doing what it is that we ought to. But *this* interest can precisely only be grounded in the rational hope which the presupposition of a moral author affords.

It is necessary that our entire course of life be subordinated to moral maxims; but it would be at the same time impossible for this to happen if reason did not connect with the moral law, which is a mere idea, an efficient cause which determines for the conduct in accord with this law an outcome precisely corresponding to our highest ends, whether in this life or in another. Thus without God and a world that is now not visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not *incentives* for resolve and realization, because they would not fulfill the whole end that is natural for every rational being and determined *a priori* and necessarily through the very same reason.¹²³

According to the first *Critique*, practical interest in *being* moral, that is, moral incentive or moral interest, is grounded only in rational hope.¹²⁴ Kant glosses the third question as: “If I do what I should, what may I then hope?” The hope that the idea of reason entitles

¹²² See, e.g., KRV 678/B706. Cf. KPV 5:119.

¹²³ KRV A812-3/B840-1, first emphasis mine.

¹²⁴ It is important to emphasize here that this point of view is in fact limited to the first *Critique*, and represents a view that, as we will see momentarily, Kant will later change his mind about.

me to grounds my moral interest, and thus unifies both my theoretical and practical interests.¹²⁵

Kant had addressed the problem of moral interest in the *Groundwork*. That work can be divided into two main parts, the first of which proceeds analytically, the second synthetically. In the first part, consisting of the first two sections, Kant proceeds with an *analysis of the concept* of morality, specifically that of an unconditionally good will, a concept which is available, he says, to “common human reason”. Kant is here explicating what it *means* to have moral duties, what it *means* for our wills to be bound by moral obligations. He is here pursuing practical reason’s interest—as described in the first *Critique*—in knowing what the moral law is, or what it says to do, assuming that there is one. Essentially, Kant is concerned in these sections only with proving the truth of the following conditional: *if* we have moral duties, *then* these duties must be grounded in the categorical imperative¹²⁶. What he has not proved thereby is the “reality and objective necessity” of the moral law, that the concept of duty is not in fact, as he says, a “chimera” or a “phantom”. He has not yet proved that we *really do* have moral duties, and that the categorical imperative *really does* create a *binding* obligation for our wills. This is the synthetic task of the infamously obscure third section.

He begins by taking advantage of the analytic connection he has elucidated in the second section between *dutiful* action and *autonomous* action.

¹²⁵ “The human mind takes (as I believe is necessarily the case with every rational being) a natural interest in morality, even though this is not undivided and practically overwhelming. Strengthen and magnify this interest, and you will find reason very tractable and even enlightened for uniting the speculative with the practical interest.” KRV A829-30/B857-8fn.

¹²⁶ GMS 4:425. “We have therefore shown at least this much: that if duty is a concept that is to contain significance and real lawgiving for our actions it can be expressed only in categorical imperatives.” Cf. GMS 4:440, 4:445.

But the proposition, the will is in all its actions a law to itself [viz. is autonomous], indicates only the principle, to act on no other maxim than that which can also have as object itself as a universal law. This, however, is precisely the formula of the categorical imperative and is the principle of morality; hence a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same.¹²⁷

This is to say that the conditional has been revised: *if* our wills are free, *then* they are bound by moral obligations in the form of a categorical imperative. That is, we must presuppose that our wills are free if we are to consider ourselves bound by the moral law. And, Kant says, we are in fact beings that cannot act otherwise than “under the idea of freedom”, and are thus “really free in a practical respect.”

But the problem in fact goes a little deeper. As I have indicated, for all Kant has said in the first two sections, it is open for us to respond in the following way. I may agree with Kant that what we *mean* by morality is dutiful action according to the categorical imperative, but insist that morality is an empty concept, so that there are no real obligations binding my will. Now, I might even assent to Kant’s revised conditional, and agree that all free wills are subject to obligations, and I might even go so far as to admit that I must at least take myself to be free insofar as I put my reason to practical use. For all that, the question could still remain what *incentive* I have to abide by, or what interest I must take in, these obligations which my rational nature creates. I am, after all, not just a rational nature, but one also subject to sensible conditions. What *worth* does acting morally really have, or better, what is the *ground* of the worth I might take it to have?

Kant puts the problem in the following way:

We have finally traced the determinate concept of morality back to the idea of freedom; but we could not even prove the latter as something real in ourselves and in human nature; we saw only that we must presuppose it if we want to think of a being as rational and endowed with consciousness of his causality with respect to

¹²⁷ GMS 4:447, my gloss.

actions, that is, with a will....But there also flowed from the presupposition of this idea *consciousness of a law for acting*: that subjective principles of actions, that is, maxims, must always be so adopted that they can also hold as objective...But *why, then, ought I to subject myself to this principle* and do so simply as a rational being...I am willing to admit that no interest impels me to do so...but I must still necessarily take an interest in it *and have insight into how this comes about*...for, if someone asked us why the universal validity of our maxim as a law must be the limiting condition of our actions, and *on what we base the worth we assign to this way of acting*...and asked us how it happens that a human being believes that *only through this does he feel his personal worth*, in comparison with which that of an agreeable or disagreeable condition is to be held as nothing...we could give him no satisfactory answer.¹²⁸

One would have thought that Kant had already provided an answer to this question in the Canon: what grounds my moral interest is the rational hope that there is a supreme intelligence which ensures that happiness will be proportionate to moral worth in the afterlife. But Kant seems to dismiss this resolution here:

We do indeed find that we can take an interest in a personal characteristic [moral worthiness] that brings with it no interest at all in a [agreeable or disagreeable] condition, if only the former makes us fit to participate in the latter *in case reason were to effect the distribution*, that is, that mere worthiness to be happy, even without the motive of participating in this happiness, can interest of itself; *but this judgment is in fact only the result of the importance we have already supposed belongs to the moral law*.¹²⁹

Instead, then, Kant thinks that the problem regarding moral interest brings out the suspicion of a “hidden circle” in his reasoning so far.

It must be freely admitted that a kind of circle comes to light here...We take ourselves as free in the order of efficient causes in order to think ourselves under moral laws in the order of ends; and we afterwards think ourselves as subject to these laws because we have ascribed to ourselves freedom of will.¹³⁰

In this formulation, it’s not entirely clear how the problem of *moral interest* engenders this circle. The implication of the former in the latter is perhaps clearer if we understand

¹²⁸ GMS 4:448-450.

¹²⁹ GMS 4:450, my emphases and bracketed glosses.

¹³⁰ GMS 4:450.

Kant in the following way. The only reason we have felt the need to presuppose the freedom of the will was because it was a necessary condition of seeing ourselves as moral subjects, that is, as possessing wills that stand under certain moral obligations, but if we then ask why we must think of ourselves as *really* subject to those obligations, that is, why we must take an interest in *fulfilling* those obligations, the only answer we have is that it is because we possess freedom of will. This makes it seem that it is *because we are free* that we assign ourselves the personal worth and dignity which would underwrite our interest in moral action as an expression of the autonomy that this freedom entails. This is clearly a thoroughly Kantian sentiment, but it is not *quite* the way he proceeds here.

Instead, Kant insists that the way out of the circle is to show that we have *independent* reason to take ourselves to possess freedom of will. It is here that he appeals to the discussion of the double character of the I introduced in the third antinomy. We may, after all, consider the practical agent from two standpoints: as an appearance, the I belongs to the world of sense and is to be considered not free but rather subject to determination by natural mechanism, here meaning empirical desires and inclinations; but as a thing in itself, the I belongs to a world of understanding, and as such, we may consider it to be free. “For now we see that when we think of ourselves as free we transfer ourselves into the world of understanding as members of it and cognize autonomy of the will along with its consequence, morality.”¹³¹ And because the world of sense and its laws are grounded in the world of understanding and *its* laws (the laws of freedom), insofar as I think of myself as a member of the world of understanding, I think

¹³¹ GMS 4:453.

of myself as subject to, obligated by, the moral law, and I think of my will as genuinely bound by it. I take an interest in morality insofar as I can see myself as a member of the intelligible world, insofar as I see myself as a thing in itself.

Kant calls the I insofar as it is a member of the world of understanding—the “I as it may be constituted in itself”¹³²—the *proper self* [*das eigentliche Selbst*].

This much is certain: it is not *because the law interests* us that it has validity for us (for that is heteronomy and dependence of practical reason upon sensibility, namely upon a feeling lying at its basis, in which case it could never be morally lawgiving); instead, the law interests because it is valid for us as human beings, *since it arose from our will as intelligence and so from our proper self*.¹³³

It is the fact that each of us, as human beings, possess a capacity to resist all determination through impulses of sensibility, and to determine our actions through reason alone, that is, the fact that we are capable of practical *self-determination*, a capacity we enjoy only insofar as we may *think* ourselves as members of an invisible, unknown world of understanding, which grounds the individual’s feeling of dignity and “the greater inner worth of his person.” But, of course, this freedom which grounds the feeling of personal worth must needs remain only an idea, so that the “subjective impossibility of explaining the freedom of the will is the same as the impossibility of discovering and making comprehensible an interest which the human being can take in moral laws”.¹³⁴ So it turns out that the felt need for “insight into how this moral interest comes about” must ultimately remain unsatisfied; it must be relegated to the realm of Kantian *Dunkelheiten*. This is to say that reason, that is, *our* reason, finite human reason, itself cannot ultimately *legitimate* its demand for moral action, for action which

¹³² GMS 4:451, preferring “I” for “*sein Ich*” rather than Gregor’s “ego”.

¹³³ GMS 4:460-1; second emphasis mine.

¹³⁴ GMS 4:459-60.

engenders the creation of a moral world.¹³⁵ The demand may be real, the interest in the demand being fulfilled may be real, but I cannot explain to myself the source of this interest. This means that I cannot justify the interest I feel I ought to take in being moral. Reason is not *self-legitimizing* in this sense. I can at best point to the feeling of worth and dignity that such moral action engenders, a worth and dignity that accrues to my proper self as the only possible source of such action, a proper self that must nevertheless remain invisible and mysterious to me. It is the rational hope, supported by both the speculative and practical interests of reason, in the existence of a “highest reason”, a supreme intelligence which could ensure the harmony of nature and morality in the highest good, the kingdom of God¹³⁶, which ultimately convinces me that all the interests of reason are capable of being simultaneously fulfilled, so that reason in fact *has* a unity.

This is in essence Kant’s response to the problem of the unity of reason. We may ask then why Kant felt the need to add two more critiques to the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork* before he could go on to the task of writing the metaphysics of nature and of morals, which was his expressed plan. As I have said, we can see these subsequent critiques, at least from one perspective, as attempts to clarify this picture of the relationship between theoretical and practical reason. As evident from the preface to the second *Critique*, Kant is interested there in responding to two issues we have already addressed. The first concerns practical reason’s lack of ability to *legitimate* the moral law in the sense that it is helpless in explaining the force that the law exerts on us, that is, its inability to expose the ground of our moral interest. The second concerns the issue of the double character of the I.

¹³⁵ The kind of world. e.g., which Kant characterizes as the “kingdom of ends”.

¹³⁶ See, e.g. KPV 5:128.

As we have seen, Kant asserts in the first *Critique* that the theoretical use of reason, on its own, cannot even prove the *possibility* of freedom. It was only the practical use of reason which could establish the possibility of freedom, because it was a necessary requirement of the moral activity with which it is concerned. Now Kant, in the second *Critique*, puts the problem of the legitimacy of reason's practical demand slightly differently. Instead of emphasizing that our moral interest—which would ensure that the moral law is sufficiently motivating—must remain unexplained, Kant conceives of the task of a critique of practical reason as answering a different problem. Now he seems to think that for all that has been said so far, it still could be an illusion that reason has a *genuinely practical use* at all. Here, Kant has amended his stance in the Canon that the practical use of reason merely amounted to the discovery of the moral law itself, a task for which the *Groundwork*'s analysis of the common concept of morality could suffice. But this is what created the possibility that the moral law could nevertheless fail to be genuinely motivating in itself. As it is now conceived, reason having a practical use *means* that reason itself can be genuinely causally effective in determining empirical action, that respect for the moral law can be a determining ground of action, i.e. motivating of itself. This explains Kant's description of the task of a critique of reason in its purely practical use at the beginning of the preface to the second *Critique* as “merely to show *that there is* pure practical reason” at all. In doing so, he thinks it manages to establish not only the possibility of freedom, but its *objective reality*, though only internal to the practical use of reason.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ “[N]ow practical reason of itself, without any collusion from speculative reason, furnishes reality to a supersensible object of the category of causality, namely to *freedom* (although as a practical concept, only for practical use), and hence establishes by means of a fact what could there be only *thought*. KPV 5:6.

This is famously accomplished through the assertion that the consciousness of the moral law is a simple “fact of reason”, which “forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic a priori proposition”.¹³⁸ With the establishment of this fact, Kant thinks he has proven that reason indeed has a practical use, i.e., that it is “practical of itself alone” and is “immediately lawgiving”.¹³⁹ The fact that consciousness of the moral law is a fact of reason itself provides the incentive to moral action.

Now, if by *incentive* is understood the subjective determining ground of the will...then it will follow...that the incentive of the human will (and of the will of every created rational being) can never be anything other than the moral law; and thus that the objective determining ground must always and quite alone be also the subjectively sufficient determining ground of action if this is not merely to fulfill the *letter* of the law without containing its *spirit*.¹⁴⁰

In other words, moral interest is *built into* the notion of practical reason having a use at all. If our reason has a practical use, then we necessarily take an interest in the moral law serving as subjective ground of our actions, that is, in acting *out of respect* for that law. Since Kant thinks that the consciousness of the moral law proves that reason has a genuinely practical use, he has thereby also allegedly proven that we have an a priori incentive to moral action. Practical reason, then, *is* self-legitimizing after all, *at least on its own terms*, that is, immanent to the use to which it is put.

Now, put in this way, the doctrine of the fact of reason can seem entirely ad hoc. Of course, the latter doctrine has engendered an enormous controversy which we are entitled to pass over for the moment. It is sufficient that the connection between the fact of reason and the self-legitimacy of reason in the practical sphere be clear. But it's important also to be clear about Kant's attitude in this regard. Again, the self-

¹³⁸ KPV 5:31.

¹³⁹ KPV 5:31.

¹⁴⁰ KPV 5:72.

legitimizing character of practical reason accrues only from the fact that the human being must understand itself as free insofar as it is a practical agent. The consciousness of “mastery over one’s inclinations” that practical reason engenders is only *analogous* “to the self-sufficiency [*Selbständigkeit*] that can be ascribed *only* to the supreme being.”¹⁴¹ “For, how a law can be of itself and immediately a determining ground of the will (though this is what is essential in all morality) is for human reason an insoluble problem and identical with that of how a free will is possible.”¹⁴² The limits of moral inquiry adumbrated in the *Groundwork* remain in place, merely pushed back a step. I may now, from a perspective *internal to the practical use of reason*, comprehend *that* the moral law of which I am conscious *itself* creates a moral interest. But the moral law has objective reality *only internal* to that perspective. If we ask how that perspective meshes with the perspective internal to the theoretical use of reason, we are left with essentially the same story the Canon gave us. The perspectives merge in the concept of the highest good, which is also the “whole object of a pure practical reason” and in which “everything stands together in the most perfect harmony”.¹⁴³ The transcendental ideas internal to the theoretical perspective receive confirmation from the practical postulates resulting from reason’s practical use: freedom in the “positive sense” (as self-determining), the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. These practical postulates are necessitated, now from a purely practical perspective as well, because they are necessary grounds of the highest good as the sole object of practical activity, the practical use of reason in its fullest sense.

¹⁴¹ KPV 5:119.

¹⁴² KPV 5:72.

¹⁴³ KPV 5:109-110.

But, even within the purely practical use of reason, the doctrine of the highest good engenders an antinomy.¹⁴⁴ The necessary connection between virtue, or worthiness to be happy, and happiness, which the highest good assumes, is after all a synthetic one. They must relate to each other as cause and effect, motive and result. So either, Kant says, the desire for happiness serves as the ground for moral action, or the moral law must serve as the ground—not just for moral action—but for actions that are the efficient cause of happiness. The first option is ruled out because such action would not be moral at all, but rather heteronomous action.

But the second is also impossible because any practical connection of causes and effects in the world, as a result of the determination of the will, *does not depend upon the moral dispositions of the will but upon knowledge of the laws of nature*...consequently no necessary connection of happiness with virtue in the world, adequate to the highest good, *can be expected from the most meticulous observance of moral laws*...If therefore, the highest good is impossible in accordance with practical rules, then the moral law, which commands us to promote it, *must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends* and must therefore in itself be false.¹⁴⁵

The threat of morality turning out to be an illusion, which guided Kant's argument in the third section of the *Groundwork*, returns here in a different form. The moral law itself provides us with a moral interest, but the practical use of reason is directed at the highest good. If action directed at the highest good is impossible, because practical reason itself cannot comprehend how virtuous action can be the efficient cause of happiness, then the moral law *as a genuine command* is in fact an illusion. This antinomy of practical reason is resolved in the very same way as the theoretical one, namely by resort to the doctrine of the double character of the I.

¹⁴⁴ see "The Antinomy of Practical Reason", KPV 5:113ff.

¹⁴⁵ KPV 5:113-4, my emphases.

[O]ne and the same acting being as *appearance* (even to his own inner sense) has a causality in the world of sense that always conforms to the mechanism of nature, but with respect to the same event, insofar as the acting person regards himself at the same time as *noumenon* (as pure intelligence, in this existence that cannot be temporally determined), he can contain a determining ground of that causality in accordance with laws of nature which is itself free from all laws of nature.¹⁴⁶

The agent, whose activity, qua manifestation of practical reason, is directed at the goal of the highest good, can be seen as the efficient cause of the happiness implicit in the latter only insofar as it is considered as noumenon, even though, as appearance, all of its activity must be considered the result of natural mechanism. It is clear then that the entire structure of Kant's solution to the problem of the unity between the theoretical and practical reason hangs upon the doctrine of the double character of the I.¹⁴⁷ Clarifying this doctrine was the second concern that I attributed to Kant in writing the second *Critique*. There is ample proof of this in the preface. There, in fact, he takes the two concerns to be intimately linked.

[N]ow practical reason of itself, *without any collusion from speculative reason*, furnishes reality to a supersensible object of the category of causality, namely to freedom (though, as a practical concept, *only for practical use*), and hence establishes *my means of a fact* what could there only be thought. By this, the strange though incontestable assertion of the speculative Critique, that even the thinking subject is in inner intuition a mere appearance to itself, gets its full confirmation in the Critique of Practical Reason.¹⁴⁸

The latter Critique then, Kant says, clarifies one of the "most considerable objections" to the former, namely "*the paradoxical requirement to make oneself as subject of freedom a noumenon but at the same time, with regard to nature, a phenomenon in one's*

¹⁴⁶ KPV 5:114.

¹⁴⁷ "The union of causality as freedom with causality as natural mechanism, the first of which is established by the moral law, the second by the law of nature, and indeed *in one and the same subject, the human being*, is impossible without representing him with regard to the first as a being in itself but with regard to the second as an appearance, with former in pure, the latter in empirical consciousness. Otherwise *the contradiction of reason with itself is unavoidable*." KPV 5:6fn., my emphases.

¹⁴⁸ KPV 5:6; I substitute Kant's emphases with my own.

own empirical consciousness”¹⁴⁹. It’s not entirely clear why Kant himself describes the fact that the subject’s self-knowledge, i.e. the subject’s awareness of itself *in empirical consciousness*, is limited to its appearance within inner sense as “paradoxical”, if his use of that word is indeed more than merely rhetorical. This is, after all, an alleged consequence of the fact, derived from the critique of theoretical reason, that knowledge of *all* objects is limited to appearances, that is, necessarily restricted to the conditions of sensible intuition. In fact, Kant already refers to the same doctrine in the first *Critique* as a “paradox”. He devotes a section of his revision of the Deduction in the B-edition to its clarification. There, Kant says, the paradox arises from the fact that it seems “contradictory” that “we intuit ourselves only as we are *internally affected*...*since we would have to relate to ourselves passively*”¹⁵⁰.

What exactly is the contradiction which gives rise to the appearance of paradox here? It is important to proceed slowly. Firstly, we have been treating—as Kant himself seems to be doing—the doctrine that the I’s self-knowledge is limited to its appearance in inner sense and the doctrine of the double character of the I as the same. Of course, they are very closely related—perhaps even mutually entailing—doctrines, but they are being put to slightly different uses. In the first *Critique*, Kant’s main concern is to deny that we have knowledge of our selves as we are constituted in ourselves, as noumena. Kant resolves the “paradox” here quite quickly by reminding us that, unlike “customary” systems of psychology, he makes a careful distinction between inner sense and apperception. The doctrine only appears contradictory if you are already assuming that

¹⁴⁹ KPV 5:6, my emphasis.

¹⁵⁰ KRV B152ff, my emphasis. This passage, and the puzzle about activity and passivity, will come up again in our discussion of Heidegger.

the faculty of inner sense is a kind of spontaneity. The appearance of paradox derives from seeing the problem like this: how can we be said to only intuit ourselves as we are *internally affected*, i.e. insofar as we are affected *by ourselves*? “To be affected” is to have a passive relationship to something outside. But we ourselves are the things (actively) affecting ourselves. We then actively relate to ourselves passively. But for Kant the inner sense *is* just a passive faculty, that is, a faculty of receptivity, which is affected by apperception, a faculty of spontaneity. The latter “under the designation of a **transcendental synthesis of the imagination**...therefore exercises that action on the **passive** subject, whose **faculty** it is, about which we rightly say that the inner sense is thereby affected.”¹⁵¹ In this regard the object of inner sense—namely, myself—is no different from any object of outer sense, except that the former is determined as appearance in time and the latter as appearance in space. “[H]ence if we admit about the [determinations of outer sense in space] that we cognize objects by their means only insofar as we are externally affected, then we must also concede that through inner sense we intuit ourselves only as we are internally affected **by our selves**.”¹⁵²

The air of paradox remains only if we press Kant on the idea that our *self-knowledge* is thereby limited to our appearance to ourselves within inner sense, i.e. insofar as we are affected, because there is also the part that is active with respect to ourselves—the part that does the affecting—the part, in other words, which is self-active with respect to itself. But Kant’s answer is that this cannot be a part of our *empirical* self-knowledge. Knowledge of ourselves as spontaneity occupies, as I discussed in the last chapter, a troubled place in the Kantian scheme of the first *Critique*. Admittedly not an empirical

¹⁵¹ KRV B153-4.

¹⁵² KRV B156.

fact about ourselves, this self-activity, the spontaneity of original synthetic activity, seems to be rather a metaphysical fact about the type of beings which we are, acknowledgment of which is necessitated by the Copernican Revolution and thus by the standpoint of transcendental philosophy itself.¹⁵³ This problematizes Kant's strategy of resolving the "paradox" in the section of the first *Critique* discussed above, namely by assimilating the problem of self-knowledge to the problem of knowledge of things in themselves in general. Presumably, whatever the thing in itself which affects our outer sense is supposed to be, it is not something self-active as the "object"—"*our selves*", Kant says—which affects our inner sense is. And this because we do not, and perhaps cannot, treat ordinary, non-human objects of empirical experience as possessing "rational natures". I have previously discussed the potential problems with understanding the "noumenal self" along the same lines as the "noumenal object", and in fact proposed a reading of the paralogsms in which Kant can be seen as making precisely this point, though ambiguously. The self as a thing-in-itself is an impossible object of knowledge precisely because *subjects* can never be treated as objects, as things, at all. Subjectivity is a fundamentally different ontological category from thinghood.

This does not require a denial that other human beings, even ourselves, show up, in a manner of speaking, within empirical consciousness, *also as objects*. They are "objects" of outer and inner sense respectively. But from a theoretical perspective, i.e. internal to the purely theoretical use of reason, this is not a problem. The latter, in itself, is directed only at the concept of nature, that is, only interested in things insofar as they are capable of showing up within the unity of nature which theoretical reason prescribes, and can be

¹⁵³ See KRV A546/B574: "Yet the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, knows [erkennt] himself also through pure apperception, and indeed in actions and inner determinations which cannot be counted at all among impressions of sense".

seen as purely natural beings, subject to the laws of natural mechanism. This is why, from the theoretical perspective, we are interested only in the *empirical character* of sensible objects, and are content that human actions—others’ and my own—are *fully* intelligible by reference to that character alone. From the theoretical perspective, we simply “pass over as entirely unknown” the intelligible character, because “this intelligible ground does not touch the empirical questions at all”.¹⁵⁴ This is also why, internal to the perspective of the first *Critique*, Kant’s ambivalence toward, or perhaps even neglect of, the metaphysical import of reason’s self-activity, can be overlooked, or simply taken for granted.¹⁵⁵

It is only now, from the practical perspective, internal to the practical use of reason, that the intelligible ground—which Kant calls the “proper self”—matters quite a bit, and thus that Kant’s ambivalence becomes more pressing. In the *Groundwork*, Kant says:

Now, a human being really finds in himself a capacity by which he distinguishes himself from all other things, even from himself insofar as he is affected by objects, and that is reason. This reason, *as pure self-activity*, is raised above the understanding by this: that *though the latter is also self-activity* and does not, like sense, contain merely representations that arise when we are affected by things (and are thus passive), yet it can produce from its activity no other concepts than those which serve merely to bring sensible representations under rules and thereby to unite them in one consciousness, without which use of sensibility it would think nothing at all; but reason, on the contrary, shows in what we call “ideas” a spontaneity so pure that it thereby goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford it, and proves its highest occupation in distinguishing the world of sense and the world of understanding from each other and thereby marking out the limits of the understanding itself.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ KRV A546-7/B573-4.

¹⁵⁵ Except, of course, for the confusion it causes regarding the question of the locus of theoretical self-activity, and the subsequent ramifications for the question of the common root, discussed in the last chapter.

¹⁵⁶ GMS 4:452, Kant’s emphases substituted for my own.

This description of reason seems intended to apply to both its theoretical and practical uses. Reason's self-activity, as opposed to the understanding's, is *pure* because it is a spontaneity which acts only *on itself*, as opposed to acting *on a sensible manifold*, which results from receptivity. It is spontaneous activity acting on spontaneous activity. But we do not have here an account of the unity of reason with itself in both of its uses, but rather a clear indication of the *tension* between the uses. For whereas the use of reason's activity in the theoretical sphere is merely *regulative*, giving the concept of nature a certain unitary character, in the moral sphere it is *constitutive*. Reason's self-activity in its practical use *produces* the moral law, that is, creates a binding obligation on itself, and thus the "idea" of its own freedom, which is expressible in moral action. This freedom of self-activity—which is, as we have said, the source of all dignity and personal worth, all personality¹⁵⁷, and ultimately all moral interest—is attributable to the self only as a noumenon, as a member of an intelligible world. The concept of a "noumenal self", problematic but ultimately dispensable from a theoretical perspective, is absolutely essential to the practical perspective, and it is here, subsequently, that the "paradoxical requirement" that my self-knowledge is limited to myself as appearance is felt more forcibly.

As I have said, the theoretical use of reason takes an interest only in the empirical character of things, including ourselves as natural beings. The practical use of reason, however, must take an interest only in our own intelligible characters. The unity of reason in its two uses ultimately rests, *with regard to our self-conception*, on the double character of the I. I want now to describe the ramifications of this doctrine for both the

¹⁵⁷ see KPV 5:87ff.

practical perspective itself and for the perspective which tries to describe the relationship between the theoretical and practical perspectives themselves. The author of the “considerable objection” which I said partially motivated Kant in writing the second *Critique*, H.A. Pistorius, reiterates his objection in his review of that work:

For one and the same subject can by no means actually have and express both kinds of freedom [practical and transcendental], since they contradict and cancel each other. Similarly, it seems incomprehensible that the human being, who comprises only one person, should at the same time really possess a double self-opposing character [*einen doppelten sich entgegengesetzten Charakter*], sensible and intelligible, as a member of two different worlds, and should in fact comprise two self-opposing I’s. I readily confess that this double character of the human being, these two I’s in the single subject, despite all the explanations that Kant himself and his disciples have given and all the uses they have made of it, particularly for the resolution of the well-known antinomy of freedom, is to me the most obscure and incomprehensible thing in the whole critical philosophy [*das Dunkelste und Unbegreiflichste in der ganzen kritischen Philosophie*].¹⁵⁸

Kant’s main concern in the section of the second *Critique* in which he attempts to clarify the “misinterpretation [*Mißdeutung*]” which he takes to underlie Pistorius’ objection—the “Critical Elucidation” at the conclusion of the *Analytic*—is to reaffirm the first *Critique*’s “consistent way of thinking”¹⁵⁹, that is, to prove that the concepts of nature and freedom do not *contradict* each other, and that the distinction between the doctrine of happiness and the doctrine of morality do not *oppose* one another. In fact, Kant spends much of his time here arguing, by elimination, that the doctrine of the double character of the I is the *only* way to “remove the apparent contradiction between the mechanism of nature and freedom in one and the same action”. Thus he argues both against the kind of empiricist/compatibilist line which wants to reduce freedom to a

¹⁵⁸ Hermann Andreas Pistorius, “Rezension der ‘Kritik der praktischen Vernunft’ (1794), p. 175; included in *Materialien zu Kants ‘Kritik der praktischen Vernunft’*, ed. by Bittner and Cramer, Suhrkamp, 1975. Translation my own.

¹⁵⁹ KPV 5:6-7.

psychological property—which produces at best, Kant says, a “freedom of a turnspit”—and the kind of rationalist/Spinozistic line which attributes human actions to the causality of a supreme being—which makes the human being into “a marionette or an automaton”. Both of these strategies, Kant maintains, fail to make my actions genuinely something “*within my control*”. He then reiterates his stance that only through seeing the I as possessing a double character does the apparent contradiction between nature and freedom disappear, that morality is only possible through the transcendental freedom which we can ascribe to ourselves as noumena, and that this freedom is a necessary postulate for reason in its practical use.

Putting aside, then, the worries about the intelligibility of the noumenal self seen from the theoretical perspective which I have already mentioned, what does the requirement of seeing myself as a noumena—resulting from the assumption of the practical perspective—entail *within that perspective*? The noumenal self—the intelligible character—is something which exists necessarily outside of time. Even though the “actions” of the noumenal self are supposed to ground the effects in the sensible world¹⁶⁰, it cannot strictly speaking be said to “act” at all.

Now this acting subject, in its intelligible character, would not stand under any conditions of time, for time is only the condition of appearances but not of things in themselves. In that subject no **action** would **arise** or **perish**...since, in it, insofar as it is a **noumenon**, nothing **happens**...Of it one would say quite correctly that it begins its effects in the sensible world **from itself**, without its action beginning **in it** itself.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ KRV A538/B566. “[O]ne can consider the causality of this being in two aspects, “as intelligible in its action as a thing in itself, and sensible in the effects of that action as an appearance in the world of sense.”

¹⁶¹ KRV A539-41/B567-69.

As Pistorius points out, we can attribute to the noumenal self only “a single unchangeable act of will”.¹⁶²

The noumenal self, “invisible and active of itself”¹⁶³, is also something with which we are “not acquainted”¹⁶⁴ and of which we are “not cognizant”¹⁶⁵. So Kant’s character-dualism makes the ordinary process of moral deliberation extremely obscure, if not completely incomprehensible. Because my intelligible character is something completely unknown to me, *nothing that I know about myself* is relevant for practical deliberation and thus moral action. This fact is not the same as the familiar Kantian point about the possibility of self-deception, namely that I can never, in any particular case, be *certain* that my action is truly done out of respect for and not just in conformity with the moral law. That kind of uncertainty can be allowed as a basic and unthreatening fact about moral deliberation and action, and about our basic cognitive and moral fallibility. It is rather that I am separated, as an empirical being facing actual moral situations, from the true source of my moral being by an absolutely unbridgeable chasm. In principle, none

¹⁶² “*Rezension...*”, p. 176. As Pistorius goes on to say, this—ironically for Kant—attributes god-like properties to the noumenal self. “Though if one conceives of the double character of the human being and of his two I’s not as existing together at the same time, but rather as following one another, so that the human being in the sensible world had nothing more than the disposition for intelligible character, nothing more than the purpose of one day becoming a pure intelligence, then one can merely assume—if the above remark is right—that he will approach this intelligible character and all of the properties and virtues connected with it only asymptotically, but will never be able to attain it. *Should he in fact attain it*, he would in fact be raised to the position and virtues of a deity, for according to the depictions of the properties and virtues of such an intelligence, all of his wishes and his actions (since he could no longer, as in the sensible world, act like this and that, and he would not be subjected to any change) had to be for him nothing more than a single unchangeable act of his will (as it must be thought for an infinite unchangeable being) and, alongside all the causality of the changeable that is attributed to him, he himself had to be considered as entirely unchangeable.” emphasis added.

¹⁶³ GMS 4:452.

¹⁶⁴ KRV A551/B579.

¹⁶⁵ GMS 4:453.

of my self-knowledge, which can only be empirical self-knowledge, *matters* in moral deliberation.

The doctrine of the double-I, then, can be seen as representing a profound *self-alienation* and *disempowerment* in the moral sphere. My intelligible character is something that I can only in a very thin and nominal sense identify with and consider “within my control”. It can seem that only in a formal and technical sense does the concept of freedom attributable to our intelligible character allow us “to find the unconditioned and intelligible for the conditioned and sensible *without going outside ourselves*.”¹⁶⁶ As unseen and unknowable, the noumenal self can seem precisely something “outside” and alien. And *yet* it is, Kant says, my proper or authentic self [*eigentliches Selbst*], and the only possible source of my personality, my moral interest, my dignity, inner worth and self-respect as a human being.

But these are potential problems only from the viewpoint of moral psychology and ethical theory itself. They are also extremely contentious issues, which thankfully we may pass over here. Abstracting from the perspective internal to practical reason, then, and considering rather the perspective which the doctrine of the double-I gives us on the unity of the two rational perspectives themselves—which is after all the main concern here—it requires of course that we see the human being as *both* subject to natural mechanism and free from natural necessity *simultaneously*. The double-I represents, after all, “the absolute unity of a phenomenon”. It is the “very same subject” which is both a natural being and has a “rational nature”, so that the “very same actions”, belonging to the “very same will”, are to be seen as both free and unfree at the very same time.

¹⁶⁶ KRV 5:105.

Theoretical reason requires that I see myself as subject to natural mechanism and all my actions as resulting from prior sensible conditions, and practical reason requires that I see myself, that is, the very same self, the very same I, as unconditioned and free from determination from those very same sensible conditions. The doctrine of the double character of the I however cannot itself *illuminate* or make intelligible to me, from within the first person perspective, say, how I can be at once *both* a natural and free—practically rational—being, nor does it explain how my own cognitive activities hang together with my practical doings—for example, how what I *know* about myself relates to what I *do*. In fairness, Kant never claims that it does. It is rather, he claims, “simply unavoidable if one wants to maintain both these mutually repellent concepts together; but in application, when one wants to explain them as *united in one and the same action*, and so to explain this union itself, great difficulties come forward, which seem to make such a unification unfeasible [*untunlich*].”¹⁶⁷ So while the account of the unity of reason in the first two critiques can help us understand how the first sense of dualism can be resolved—namely how the natural world-order is compatible with a moral world-order—and to *some* degree it helps with the second as well—namely how a being can be seen, from an impersonal perspective as it were, to be both a natural being and a moral agent—the account does not help us at all with the third sense of dualism. It fails to give us any account of how *our* theoretical and practical activities hang together in a unified self-conception of who we are.

¹⁶⁷ KPV 5:95, my emphasis. One can see this passage as the analogue to the quote from the *Anthropology* regarding the common root. What is in other places optimistically hoped for is elsewhere pessimistically dismissed.

But Kant has one more point to make in the second *Critique* regarding the relationship between theoretical and practical reason. It is the famous doctrine of the “primacy of the practical”, which seems to take a step toward reconciling the third dualism.

But if pure reason of itself can be and really is practical, as the consciousness of the moral law proves it to be, *it is still one and the same reason* which, whether from a theoretical or practical perspective, judges according to a priori principles; and then it is clear that, even if from the first perspective its capacity does not extend to establishing certain propositions affirmatively, although they do not contradict it, as soon as these same propositions belong inseparably to the practical interest of pure reason it must accept them—indeed as something offered to it from another source, which has not grown on its own land but yet is sufficiently authenticated—and try to compare and connect them with everything that it has within its power as speculative reason, being mindful, however, that these are not its insights but are yet extensions of its use from another, namely a practical perspective; and this is not in the least opposed to *its interest*, which consists in the restriction of speculative mischief. Thus, in the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition, the latter has primacy, assuming that this union is not contingent and discretionary but based a priori on reason itself and therefore necessary. For, *without this subordination a conflict of reason with itself would arise* ... But one cannot require pure practical reason to be subordinated to speculative reason and so reverse the order, since *all interest is ultimately practical* and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone.¹⁶⁸

Assuming, that is, that reason *must* ultimately be unitary, a subordination of one set of interests to another is required in order to avoid an unacceptable internal conflict within reason itself. The theoretical perspective on things, including on myself, taken by, say, science, must be subordinated to the moral perspective because, simply put, morality is more important to us than science, viz. to theoretical inquiry and its results. The self-conception that contemplation of “the moral law within” engenders—which reveals to me a “life independent of animality”, “reaching into the infinite”—is more important to us than the self-conception engendered by contemplation of the “starry heavens” which

¹⁶⁸ KPV 5:121, my emphasis.

“annihilates my importance as an animal creature”.¹⁶⁹ As I say, this helps resolve the tension to a degree, that is, insofar as it helps me understand how my theoretical and practical identities, as it were, fit together, namely by one being subordinated to the other. My moral identity as free from the causal order of nature *trumps* as it were my “theoretical identity”, which I might get for example from neuroscience—what I *am*, and thus everything I feel and do, is wholly explainable in terms of an enormously complex neurophysiological system. But why must the subordination go only in this direction?

It might seem strange that Kant puts this point so ambiguously by saying that “all interest is ultimately practical”. This seems at first blush either tautological or false, neither of which makes the point that the subordination *must* go only in one direction. Of course all interest is “practical” in the sense that it is essentially involved in all goal-oriented activity. Science itself is a human activity guided by interests of a kind, which makes it practical in this broader sense. If Kant means here that all interest is *purely* practical, i.e. moral, then this is simply not true. Aside from non-moral practical interests (even in a stricter sense, e.g. prudential and technological interests), *theoretical* reason has its own interests, namely in producing a unitary concept of nature, on the one hand, and, as Kant himself has just said, in avoiding “speculative mischief” on the other, neither of which must be seen as in themselves *moral* concerns or *reducible* to moral concerns. It’s not entirely clear why one might not instead *ultimately* feel the need to subordinate moral interest and its insistence on freedom—an assumption as important and necessary as it might be admitted to be within the domain of action, to the interest in, say, plain scientific truth, which could insist that that freedom and that morality is ultimately an

¹⁶⁹ See the famous conclusion to KPV, 5:161ff.

illusion. Such a (contrary) resolution of the conflict of reason *through subordination* of one use of reason to another could simply insist that—though “*pretending*” we are free is indeed necessary internal to the standpoint of action—at the end of the day we are *not*, and this because *science* says we are not. We will return indirectly to these considerations in a moment, but it remains first to remark on Kant’s return to the problem of the unity of reason in his third and last critique. Here Kant seems to make another attempt to address the third dualism.

It is evident that Kant himself did not remain completely satisfied with all that has been said so far regarding the relationship between the theoretical and practical perspectives. In the introduction to the third *Critique*, Kant now asserts that it is a third faculty altogether, the power of judgment, which is capable of mediating the two.

Now although there is an incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, *so that from the former to the latter (thus by means of the theoretical use of reason) no transition is possible*, just as if there were so many different worlds, the first of which can have no influence on the second: yet the latter should have an influence on the former, namely the concept of freedom should make the end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world; and nature must consequently also be able to be conceived in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of the ends that are to be realized in it in accordance with the laws of freedom. – Thus there must still be *a ground of the unity of the supersensible that grounds nature with that which the concept of freedom contains practically*, the concept of which, even if it does not suffice for cognition of it either theoretically or practically, and thus has no proper domain of its own, nevertheless makes possible the transition from the manner of thinking in accordance with the principles of the one to that in accordance with the principles of the other.¹⁷⁰

It is, then, Kant later asserts, the *power of judgment* which “*provides the mediating concept* between the concepts of nature and the concept of freedom, which makes possible the transition from the purely theoretical to the purely practical”, which is the

¹⁷⁰ KU 5:175-6.

“concept of the purposiveness of nature”¹⁷¹. Kant here amends his claim in the first *Critique* that the ideas of theoretical reason themselves are capable of providing a transition to the practical use of reason. There, the idea of God as highest reason and supreme intelligence and thus guarantor of the highest good was itself the source of the concept of “the purposive unity of things”.

But we needn’t dwell too long here on whether or not Kant is simply redescribing the division of labor among the faculties. In the third as well as the first critiques, the central issue with respect to this question was the way in which we are able to conceive of the *natural world itself* as compatible with and even amenable to the demands that practical reason exerts on it. What is important about the third *Critique* in this regard is its description of the faculty of aesthetic judgment as providing another, non-theoretical and in itself non-moral, perspective on the natural world, but one which is connected to morality and relevant to moral considerations in two ways.¹⁷² Kant says that intellectual interest in natural beauty is a “*sign* of a good moral character” and that beauty itself is a “*symbol* of morality”.

Aesthetic experience of natural beauty provides an *independent* perspective—independent of the purely moral perspective—in which the natural world nevertheless shows up as supportive of moral experience. The aesthetic power of judgment can provide an independent perspective because, as a “higher faculty”, it is, Kant says, autonomous. A faculty can be seen as autonomous insofar as it is self-legislating within a

¹⁷¹ KU 5:196.

¹⁷² I will be restricting my discussion here to the aesthetic experience of *natural beauty*. This means that I will be excluding, for the sake of brevity, both the cases of artistic beauty and the sublime, as well as the *logical*, as opposed to the aesthetic, use of the power of judgment. I don’t believe any of these omissions affect the validity of my discussion here.

particular sphere. Though the a priori principles of aesthetic judgment, and its concept of purposiveness, are not constitutive with respect to the concept of nature—but rather only regulative—they are constitutive with respect to the pleasure or displeasure which the aesthetic judgment grounds.

The spontaneity in the play of the faculties of cognition, the agreement of which contains the ground of this pleasure, makes that concept [of a purposiveness of nature] suitable for mediating the connection of the domain of the concept of nature with the concept of freedom in its consequences, in that the latter *at the same time promotes the receptivity of the mind for the moral feeling*.¹⁷³

For Kant, an aesthetic judgment that some natural object *x* is beautiful involves the ascription of the *form* of purposiveness [*Zweckmäßigkeit*] to *x*, without, however, a representation of the actual purpose [*Zweck*] of *x*. The beautiful object of aesthetic judgment is beautiful insofar as it is judged to have, Kant says, “purposiveness without a purpose”. The purely aesthetic judgment, and the pleasure attendant upon it, is *disinterested* precisely because it is not based on any representation of the purpose of the natural object, e.g. its inherent goodness, agreeableness (pleasing the “senses in sensation”), or usefulness. But though the aesthetic judgment cannot therefore be *grounded* in any interest in the object, it is able to *produce* an intellectual interest in the existence of the object.¹⁷⁴ So in addition to the faculty of “merely aesthetic judgment”,

we also have a faculty of intellectual judgment, for determining a priori for mere forms of practical maxims...a satisfaction which we make into a law for everyone without our judgment being grounded on any interest, **although it produces one**.

¹⁷³ KU 5:197. Bracketed gloss and emphases mine.

¹⁷⁴ KU 5:299: “Someone who alone (without any intention of wanting to communicate his observations to other) considers the beautiful shape of wildflower, a bird, an insect, etc., in order to marvel at it, to love it, and to be unwilling for it to be entirely absent from nature, even though some harm might come to him from it rather than there being any prospect of advantage to him from it, takes an immediate and certainly intellectual interest in the beauty of nature. I.e., not only the form of its product but also its existence pleases him, even though no sensory charm has a part in this and he does not combine any sort of purpose [*Zweck*] in it.” Preferring, here and hereafter, “purpose” for “*Zweck*” rather than Guyer’s and Mathews’ “end”.

The pleasure or displeasure in the first judgment is called that of taste, in the second that of *moral feeling*.¹⁷⁵

Though aesthetic experience is capable of producing a moral feeling, Kant is clear here that aesthetic judgment is not capable of independently generating the *moral interest* which has vexed us previously. That is to say that aesthetic experience does not itself create an incentive to be moral. Indeed, it is only for one who has “already firmly established his interest in the morally good”, that the judgment of natural beauty will take on, as it were, a moral tenor. It is this which allows Kant to assert that to take an interest in natural beauty is “the mark of a good soul” or “at least indicates a disposition of the mind that is favorable to the moral feeling”¹⁷⁶.

But what is it about natural *beauty* that is evocative of a *moral* feeling, and makes the appreciation of it capable of strengthening or at least expressing a preexisting moral interest? It is the fact that in aesthetic experience of natural beauty, nature is able to show up as itself displaying *the type of purposiveness*—though only *formally*—which the purely practical, i.e. moral, perspective demands; in other words, it allows us to see purposiveness as *also a feature of nature* itself.

[I]t also interests reason that the ideas (for which it produces an immediate interest in the moral feeling) also have objective reality, i.e., *that nature should at least show some trace or give a sign that it contains in itself some sort of ground for assuming a lawful correspondence of its products with our satisfaction...* [N]ature, which in its beautiful products shows itself *as art*, not merely by chance, but *as it were intentionally*, in accordance with a lawful arrangement and as purposiveness without a purpose.¹⁷⁷

Based on this, we might interpret the significance of aesthetic experience for moral feeling in the following way: aesthetic experience allows us to experience nature, and the

¹⁷⁵ KU 5:300, last emphasis mine.

¹⁷⁶ KU 5:298-99.

¹⁷⁷ KU 5:301, my emphases.

purposiveness constitutive of the experience qua aesthetic, as grounded in a will which ensures that nature is compatible with our moral demands, i.e. God. This would assimilate Kant's strategy of unifying reason's two demands here in the third *Critique* to the one adopted in the first *Critique*, namely that of seeing the unity grounded in the end—shared by the two demands—of the highest good, which God alone could ensure. The aesthetic power of judgment would mediate the faculty of cognition and desire by supplying *another* source of reasons for viewing nature as grounded in a supreme intelligence which ensures a harmony between our concepts of nature and freedom. Nature is beautiful, to put it simply, because we can see it as God's work, and thus as expressive of a purposive design which would itself ensure the possibility of the highest good and support our moral activity. Sensitivity to natural beauty would be the mark of a moral nature because it would mirror a sensitivity to the *divine ground* of nature. God as the moral author of the world would also then be the source of the "cipher by means of which nature figuratively speaks to us in its beautiful forms", of the "language that nature brings to us and that seems to have a higher meaning."¹⁷⁸

It is interesting, however, that this is *not* the route that Kant chooses here.¹⁷⁹ In defining "purposiveness", Kant says:

*An object or a state of mind or even an action, even if its possibility does not necessarily presuppose the representation of an end, is called purposive merely because its possibility can only be explained and conceived by us insofar as we assume as its ground a causality in accordance with ends, i.e., a will that has arranged it so in accordance with the representation of a certain rule. Purposiveness can thus exist without an end, insofar as we do not place the causes of this form in a will, but can still make the explanation of its possibility conceivable to ourselves only by deriving it from a will.*¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ KU 5:301, 302.

¹⁷⁹ Though Kant in fact returns to these themes in the later sections on the *teleological* power of judgment.

¹⁸⁰ KU 5:220, my emphasis.

Again, it might seem natural to assume that the “will which has arranged” nature—the possibility of which underwrites the aesthetic judgment of the purposiveness of the aesthetic object—refers to God. But this cannot be, because in this case we could also thereby represent to ourselves the end itself, namely the *highest good*, which would in this way be purposiveness *with* a determinate purpose. It is crucial to aesthetic judgment, as we have seen, that it represents to itself *no purpose whatsoever*. The source, rather, of the (merely formal) purposiveness of the aesthetic object is *the formally purposive activity of the cognitive faculties themselves*, namely imagination and understanding, in their “harmonious free play”. This becomes clearer in Kant’s discussion of the “ideality” of the purposiveness in the beautiful in nature.¹⁸¹

That nature has the property of containing an occasion for us to perceive the *inner purposiveness* in the relationship of our mental powers in the judging of certain of its products, and indeed as something that has to be explained as necessarily and universally valid *on the basis of a supersensible ground*, cannot be an end of nature, or rather judged by us as such a thing: because otherwise the judgment that would thereby be determined would be grounded in heteronomy and would not, as befits a judgment of taste, be free and grounded in autonomy.¹⁸²

If what mattered for a judgment of beauty contained a representation of the “outer” purposiveness of nature, then what is beautiful would be an *empirical* matter, which would rob the power of aesthetic judgment of its autonomy. It is *not* primarily the concept of the “outer” purposiveness judged to be in nature—which was, after all, already evident from reason’s role in the purely theoretical perspective—but rather the “inner” purposiveness of the faculties of cognition, in their *aesthetic* employment, which mirrors the purposiveness of moral activity. “[S]ince we never encounter [purposiveness without

¹⁸¹ See §58 of KU.

¹⁸² KU 5:350, my emphases.

a purpose] *externally*, we naturally seek [it] *within ourselves*, and indeed in that which constitutes the ultimate end of our existence, namely the moral vocation.”¹⁸³

For since the beautiful must not be judged in accordance with concepts, but rather in accordance with the *purposive disposition of the imagination* for its correspondence with the faculty of concepts in general, it is not a rule or precept but only that which is merely nature *in the subject*, i.e., *the supersensible substratum of all our faculties*...and so that in relation to which it is the ultimate end given by the intelligible in our nature to make all our cognitive faculties agree.¹⁸⁴

But this is just what we were after. Kant had said that the possibility of a transition from “the manner of thinking” contained in the theoretical perspective to that contained in the practical was a concept of purposiveness which could serve as the “ground of the unity of the supersensible that grounds nature with that which the concept of freedom contains practically”¹⁸⁵. It turns out that, from the *aesthetic* perspective on nature, it is not primarily the purposiveness that nature displays in its beauty, but the purposiveness displayed by the judging subject himself—which is nevertheless *taken to correspond to* the purposiveness of nature—which provides the possibility of a transition from the theoretical to the practical perspective. Inner purposiveness allows us to think the unity between the supersensible ground of nature, as the sensible, and the supersensible ground of the subject, as freedom. The faculty of the aesthetic power of judgment:

sees itself, both on account of this inner possibility in the subject as well as on account of the outer possibility of *a nature that corresponds to it*, as related to something in the subject itself and outside of it, which is neither nature nor

¹⁸³ KU 5:301, my emphases.

¹⁸⁴ KU 5:344, my emphases. I intend to pass over here the ramifications of assigning the *imagination* “in its free play”, as Kant calls it, a special role in the mediation between the theoretical and practical uses of reason. The possibilities that the faculty of imagination *in its aesthetic employment* affords for a unitary account of the subject will indeed be an important theme for the **Romantic** reception of Kant—see, e.g. Schiller’s account of the *Spieltrieb* in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*—but is not a theme picked up by the Idealists themselves. For a fascinating account of the role of imagination in this regard see Jane Kneller’s *Kant and the Power of Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.

¹⁸⁵ KU 5:176.

freedom, but which is connected with the ground of the latter, namely the supersensible, in which the theoretical faculty is combined with the practical, *in a mutual and unknown way*, to form a unity.¹⁸⁶

This is why beauty may be seen as a “symbol” of morality. Objects of natural beauty “arouse sensations that contain something *analogical* to the consciousness of a mental state produced by moral judgments.”¹⁸⁷ It is the experience of the “freedom of the imagination” in aesthetic judging which is taken to be an analogy for the freedom of reason itself in its moral self-legislation.¹⁸⁸ And because imagination is connected to the “sensibility of our faculty”, aesthetic judgment is, Kant says, “at bottom a faculty for the judging of the *sensible rendering of moral ideas*”¹⁸⁹.

This is indeed an improvement on Kant’s earlier strategies for solving the problem of the unity of reason, particularly with regard to the third dualism. As we saw, Kant in the first two critiques attempts to give us a picture of the world in which reason’s two demands are unified in the idea of the highest good. In terms of self-conception, the “fact of reason” was meant to ensure that the practical demand, in addition to the theoretical, is self-legitimizing, and that conceiving of ourselves as natural beings poses no threat to our moral interest. This involved conceiving of the I as having a double character, as being simultaneous a member of two different worlds, the unity of which itself could receive, in principle, no explanation. The best we have to go on is the assertion that our being as moral agents *matters more to us* than our being as natural creatures. Now, the self-conception afforded to us as beings capable of *aesthetic experience* indeed attempts to

¹⁸⁶ KU 5:353; my emphasis.

¹⁸⁷ KU 5:354; my emphasis.

¹⁸⁸ KU 5:354.

¹⁸⁹ KU 5:356, my emphasis.

take us a step further. To see this we must look at the last quoted passage carefully. Kant says there that in aesthetic judging, the subject sees itself as related to something x , which (1) is inside the subject and outside the subject, (2) is neither nature nor freedom, (3) is connected to the supersensible, and (4) combines the theoretical and the practical. Now this x is the purposiveness of the subject's own *cognitive* faculties, experienced as a free play within aesthetic experience itself as a ground of the aesthetic judgment. The claim here is that in the aesthetic judging of natural beauty I am aware of a certain kind of freedom—call it *aesthetic freedom*—which is neither identical to the spontaneity involved in a purely theoretical perspective on nature, nor to the spontaneity involved in the self-legislation of the moral law, but is a kind of freedom which is *both* nevertheless in tune with the natural world *as natural*, and allows an analogy with the freedom of moral action. Aesthetic judgment, finally, makes possible the transition by allowing insight into how the “*supersensible that grounds nature*” can be related to “that which the concept of freedom contains practically”, namely, the *supersensible that grounds freedom*.

In other words, it allows me a way of thinking the intelligible ground of the unity of my faculties (inner purposiveness) in harmony with the unity of nature (outer purposiveness)—i.e. purposiveness both “inside and outside the subject”—as also the intelligible ground which the moral perspective requires, i.e. freedom. It allows me to think—*without* reference to the highest good—the harmony of nature and freedom in a single supersensible ground. I say this represents a step further because it involves a way of connecting the *unity of my faculties* with the *unity of the world* in which nature and freedom coexist. Aesthetic judgment mediates nature and freedom by connecting the

supersensible ground of the unity of my faculties (inner purposiveness) with *both* the supersensible ground of nature (outer purposiveness) and the supersensible ground of freedom (moral purposiveness).

The mediation between the concepts of nature and freedom, and thus the transition from one use of reason to the other, functions by connecting one concept, the inner purposiveness of aesthetic freedom, to each of the former two concepts individually. There are thus, in a manner of speaking, *two analogies* at work here. First, there is an analogy between the freedom of inner purposiveness and the outer purposiveness of natural objects considered aesthetically, i.e. as beautiful; and secondly, there is an analogy between the freedom of inner purposiveness (which I called aesthetic freedom) and moral purposiveness. The latter is the freedom involved in moral activity directed at achieving the end of a “moral world”. The first analogy is grounded in the *correspondence*, as Kant calls it, between the purposive activity involved in the aesthetic judging itself and the purposiveness of the natural object itself. The second analogy is grounded in the *symbolic* relationship between aesthetic freedom and moral freedom.

Now, these are meant to be merely *analogies*, of course, which means that they will be alike in some respects but unlike in other respects. But even if we then overlook the ways in which the analogies break down in each particular case, that is, if we ignore the ways in which inner and outer purposiveness are unlike in some respects, and if at the same time ignore the ways in which aesthetic freedom and moral freedom are unlike in some respects, accepting of course that in both cases there *are* germane features that make them alike enough to warrant the analogy—the problem remains, however, that this does not guarantee a useful correspondence between the features that warrant the analogy

in the one case and the features that warrant the analogy in the second case. What we are interested in after all is the features shared by outer purposiveness, i.e. nature, on the one hand, and moral purposiveness, i.e. freedom, on the other hand.

Without such an account, the alleged ability to think the *connection* between the supersensible ground that unifies the purposive activities of my cognitive faculties with nature with the supersensible ground that unifies the purposive activity of my cognitive faculties with freedom will fail to illuminate how seeing nature from the aesthetic perspective is able to unify the *theoretical* perspective on *how the world is* with my *moral* perspective regarding *how the world ought to be and thus how I ought to act in that world*. Before the third *Critique*, Kant could only rely on the doctrine that the supersensible itself was after all the *ground* of the sensible. Though this relationship of grounding must necessarily remain unknown and inexplicable, and thus the empirical and intelligible characters *apparently* in contradiction—one determined by natural necessity and the other free—it permitted the thought that the intelligible character grounded the empirical character, so that in fact there could be no contradiction between them, considered from the perspective of the subject as just another being in the world, which just like any other object, could be considered as phenomenon and noumenon. In other words, the *spontaneity* of the subject's theoretical conception *of itself* does not factor in to this way of reconciling the theoretical and the practical perspectives. Still, the freedom of the unknown intelligible character allowed me to think myself free *with respect to my actions*, even given their simultaneous determination by their empirical and thus mechanistic character.

Now, the third *Critique* indeed takes us a step further in one direction by precisely focusing on the spontaneity of the purposive activity of aesthetically *judging* nature. This permits us to think the unity of *the cognitive faculties* themselves in that spontaneous activity together with the unity of nature in a supersensible ground. But *with respect to my actions*, I have gotten no further. For the aesthetic perspective shares with the theoretical perspective a merely *spectatorial* relationship with nature. Thus the experience of aesthetic freedom, the spontaneity of the aesthetic perspective, is no more and no less illuminative of the relationship between the spontaneity of the theoretical perspective and the spontaneity of the practical perspective than the doctrine of the double character of the I. This is to say that even though the third *Critique* attempts to illuminate not just how the natural *world*—now seen from an aesthetic rather than theoretical perspective—is amenable to the moral demands the practical perspective puts on it, but also how the subject’s theoretical perspective *on itself* is amenable to its practical self-conception, ultimately the “transition” in the third *Critique* can succeed only in the first task but not in the second. Just as the regulative use of the ideas of theoretical reason allowed me to conceive of the natural world as amenable to my practical demands, aesthetic experience allows me to conceive of the world as displaying a certain purposiveness which, because it mirrors the inner purposiveness I experience as part of the aesthetic experience itself, portrays *nature* as open to my moral ends—as I *find them* through the practical use of reason—but unless I can also understand how that aesthetic purposive *activity* relates to the purposive practical activity of *setting those moral ends for myself* and acting in such a way to bring them about, I have not actually shown more than the regulative use of theoretical reason has shown. This is to say that

the aesthetic power of judgment, just like the theoretical use of reason itself, can advance our understanding of the possibility of the unity of reason only on the level of a unified perspective of the *world* and not on the level of a unified *self-conception*. The new strategy in the third *Critique* has ultimately the same inadequacies as the strategies of the first two critiques with regard to the third dualism.

c) The Self-Legitimation of Reason and the Unity of the Subject's Self-Conception

Nevertheless, Kant's strategy in the third *Critique* can put in plain focus both Kant's considered opinion on the limits of the possibility of a unified account of reason and the Idealist strategy for surpassing those limits. Kant's strategy was to allow us a way of *thinking* the intelligible ground of the unity of the *cognitive* faculties (in harmony with the supersensible ground of objects of natural beauty) as in harmony with the intelligible ground of the *practical* faculty, i.e. of the subject as free from sensible conditions and thus morally self-legislative. But of course, because the "intelligible ground" is always to be thought of as a *noumenal* object, in this case a noumenal *self*, and thus unknowable, the unity of the cognitive faculties themselves as well as the unity of the faculty of cognition, taken as a whole, with the ground of the practical faculty, the moral "proper self", can be shown only to be *possible* but never ultimately explicable or articulable. This is to say that it is impossible to articulate the common ground between the spontaneity involved in theoretical activity which legislates the concept of nature—including our self-conception as natural beings—and the spontaneity involved in practical activity which self-legislates the moral law—and thus our self-conception as moral

beings with binding obligations on our wills. This is because by definition it is impossible to have insight into the inner constitution of the noumenal self.

As I said in the last chapter, from the point of view of the early Idealists and Heidegger, Kant shied away from looking for the unity of all our cognitive faculties in a common root, and thus in a unitary ground of the original synthetic activity of the theoretical subject, assigning it instead to an unknowable noumenal ground, because he was not sensitive enough to the metaphysical import of the Copernican revolution he had himself enacted, and thus demurred at developing a metaphysics of subjectivity as spontaneous self-activity. I hope that the reasons that the Idealists saw the potential of such a metaphysics of subjectivity to also provide a unified account of the subject in *both* its theoretical and practical activities can now be seen in sharp relief. They hope to show the source of both of these activities—and thus the source of the unity of the perspectives they afford on both the world *and the subject itself*—in the metaphysically sui generis self-activity of the subject qua subject¹⁹⁰. They hope to show that there is a single unitary structure of subjectivity, consisting in its capacity for spontaneous self-activity.

It remains to discuss two issues regarding the Kantian solution to the problem of the unity of reason in terms of the significance it will have for the Idealists. The first is the issue of *self-legitimation*. Reason is self-legitimizing with respect to one of its faculties if it possesses the resources internal to itself to ensure *a priori* that the demand it exerts is capable of satisfaction. Theoretical reason demands that experience have the unity of nature. It is able to legitimate this demand a priori through the functioning of the understanding's pure concepts as a condition of experience itself as well as through the

¹⁹⁰ Recall Kant's own description of reason in the *Groundwork* as "pure self-activity" at GMS 4:452.

unity of the understanding's rules themselves achieved through the rational principles—employed in the regulative use—of theoretical reason. This is just what nature is, and it explains how objectively valid knowledge of nature through scientific investigation is indeed possible. Kant's doctrine of the "fact of reason" is, as I mentioned, *intended* to show that reason in its practical employment is indeed self-legitimizing. It ensures that practical reason's demand for moral action, that is, action out of pure respect for the moral law unconditioned by any empirical attributes of the subject, is indeed possible. So for Kant reason is self-legitimizing within each of its respective domains. Within the theoretical perspective, the demand for a concept of nature and thus the possibility of scientific knowledge is satisfied internal to that perspective and without recourse to resources outside it. Likewise, within the practical perspective, the demand for a concept of freedom and thus the possibility of genuine morality is satisfied internal to that perspective and without recourse to resources outside it. But reason taken as a whole *cannot* be self-legitimizing, in that human reason *itself*, i.e. without recourse to anything outside of it, cannot ensure that both of its demands are capable of *simultaneous* satisfaction. Rather, human reason must postulate the existence of a highest reason which is the ground of the *harmony* between the concepts of nature and freedom in the idea of the highest good. This is to say that human reason is ultimately not *self-sufficient*, or *selbständig*, because for Kant, *only divine reason* can be seen as possessing self-sufficiency or *Selbständigkeit*. And since nature and freedom can only be harmonized within the concept of divine, or *infinite*, reason, there must remain, for *finite human reason*, a *disharmony* or discord between nature and freedom, between science and morality, in our conception of the world.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ For a persuasive account of why there must remain such a disharmony or discord in Kant's account of

The second issue concerns the results of Kant's account of the unity of reason for the subject's *self-conception*. I have said that one desiderata for such an account is not just a unified picture of the world which, grounded in divine reason, is amenable to both our theoretical and practical demands, but a unified conception of the subject, and thus the subject's self-conception, in both its theoretical and practical activities or capacities. We have seen that for Kant we must rather see the subject as *divided* into a double character whose ultimate unity must remain mysterious. In addition, my *self-knowledge* must remain limited to my self-conception as a natural being. In order to avoid an irreconcilable conflict within the subject's self-conception as both a natural being and a free, moral being, then, we must simply *subordinate* the interests of theoretical reason to our moral interest, because only through our self-conception as moral beings are we able to attribute dignity and inner worth to ourselves. We may call these two closely related features of Kant's solution to the unity of reason—the necessary schism within the subject and the limitation of self-knowledge to the empirical—the “paradox of subjectivity”; though Kant himself of course, acknowledging them on some level as “paradoxical”, believes the air of paradox is removed through the distinction between the phenomenal self and the noumenal self.

Now, as we will see in the next part, Fichte, beginning with the notion developed in the second section, attempts to develop a metaphysics of subjectivity which simultaneously avoids the paradox and proves human reason to be self-sufficient. He locates the “common root”—that is, the unitary ground of all our theoretical capacities—and the unity of our theoretical *and* practical capacities within a single unitary structure

the unity of reason, see Susan Neiman's *The Unity of Reason: Rereading Kant*; Oxford, 1994.

of subjectivity, which he calls the self-positing I. The I is thus for Fichte *self-constituting*, which Fichte sees as providing proof that human reason is self-sufficient after all.

Part II: Fichte, Self-Constitution and the Self-Sufficiency of Reason

The aim of this part is to describe in outline the direction Fichte takes in developing a metaphysics of subjectivity which is sensitive to and takes as its starting point the metaphysical import of Kant's Copernican Revolution, that is, which understands spontaneous self-activity as the sui generis feature of subjectivity. I will be focusing on two themes: Fichte's account of this feature as self-positing, or self-constituting, and his understanding of this feature as simultaneously solving the problem of the unity of reason and demonstrating the self-legitimacy and self-sufficiency of reason as a whole. My intent is to demonstrate the intimate connection between these issues in the development of Fichte's particular brand of idealism, while maintaining that the two key issues, namely self-constitution and self-sufficiency, are not necessarily conceptually tied together as they are for Fichte. This will put us in a position to understand how Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik* is an ontological account of finite subjectivity which is influenced by the Idealist strategy of responding to the Kantian problems I have outlined in the last chapters, while simultaneously "moving in the opposite direction" from Idealism.

1) The Metaphysics of Subjectivity and the “Transcendental Circle”

In my discussion of the Paralogisms, I claimed that there was a basic ambiguity regarding locating precisely where and why the claims of rational psychology go wrong, and thus why the latter inevitably falls into error and illusion. On the one hand, we can see the project of rational psychology as inherently flawed in that it attempts to apply concepts—substantiality, simplicity, etc.—to the self “as it is in itself”, that is, to the *noumenal self*, which are rather properly applicable to the self *only* as it appears to itself, that is, the *empirical self*. In other words, it illegitimately attempts to abstract in the case of the self *qua* object from the subjective conditions of anything *being an object at all*. The self insofar as it is or can be an *object* for itself, is conditioned by an a priori form of intuition, time, and thus merely an appearance within inner sense.

This is in fact the way Kant seems to argue, but I suggested that his account contains hints of another diagnosis and another, more basic, mistake. This latter interpretation would locate the problem with rational psychology in its very attempt to treat “the subject”, or better, *subjectivity*, as just another *thing* among others, a thing *qua* thing our knowledge of which must of course be limited by the conditions of experience, and thus restricted to an appearance. This thought—that the determining subject is not in anyway a *thing* and that subjectivity belongs in a fundamentally different “metaphysical category” than that of things—is the guiding motivation behind the development after Kant of what I’ve called the “metaphysics of subjectivity”. The latter attempts to give a metaphysical account not of the “determinable self” as it is in itself, that is, into the nature of the “thinking thing” considered as a thing, which would thus fall foul of Kant’s critique in

the Paralogisms, but rather of the “determining self”, that is, the self considered *as the activity* of determining. And this account is metaphysical because it treats this activity as a sui generis but non-empirical, a priori feature of subjectivity as such.¹⁹²

This thought is present from the very beginning of Fichte’s own philosophical development, and we might even refer to it as the original insight which sparks the development of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. It is present already in Fichte’s review of Schulze’s *Aenesidemus* in early 1794, where Fichte first develops the idea of what I will refer to as the “transcendental circle”. The original Schulze text is a skeptical polemic directed against Kantian philosophy in the form of Reinhold’s *Elementarphilosophie*. Reinhold had attempted to further systematize Kant’s theoretical philosophy by grounding it in a single principle which he called the Principle of Consciousness¹⁹³. He claimed to have discovered the so-called “common root” in the “faculty of representation [*Vorstellungsvermögen*]” which he derived from an analysis of the Principle of Consciousness. Fichte’s strategy throughout the review is that of largely granting to Schulze that *Reinhold’s* claims to have discovered the absolute first principle of philosophy do not succeed, but only because they need to be grounded in a *further* principle, which a closer reading of Kant is able to uncover. In particular, Fichte accuses Schulze—in line with the basic metaphysical claim mentioned at the outset—of falling prey to mistaking subjectivity for a kind of determinate thing. In response to Schulze’s doubts about the “objective existence” of the faculty of representation, Fichte writes,

¹⁹² This is why I intentionally talk of a “metaphysics of subjectivity” rather than a “metaphysics of *the subject*”; what is metaphysically distinctive about subjectivity is that it *is* an activity of a certain kind (we will see what kind this is supposed to be), and never a special kind of *thing*, or a thing with a distinctive property.

¹⁹³ Which reads: “In consciousness the subject distinguishes the representation from both the subject and the object and relates it to them both.” (*Beyträge*, I:267)

regarding the skeptic, that “as soon as he hears the words ‘faculty of representation’, [he] can think only of some sort of thing (round or square?) which exists as a thing in itself, *independently of its being represented*, and indeed, exists as *a thing which represents*.”¹⁹⁴

Rather:

The initial incorrect presupposition, and the one which caused the Principle of Consciousness to be proposed as the first principle of all philosophy, was precisely the principle that one must begin with a fact. We certainly do require a first principle which is material and not merely formal. But such a principle does not have to express a *fact* [*Tatsache*]; it can also express a *factical activity* [*Tathandlung*].¹⁹⁵

The problem, as Fichte sees it, with grounding all knowledge in a faculty of *representation*, in the way Reinhold does, is that it can only represent the activity of representing through a representation, that is, a representation *of an object*.

[I]f everything that can be discovered in the mind is an act of representing, and if every act of representing is undeniably an *empirical* determination of the mind, then *the very act of representing*, along with all of its conditions, *is given to consciousness only through the representation of representing*. It is thus *empirically* given, and empirical representations are the objects of all reflection concerning consciousness.¹⁹⁶

This is one way to understand why Kant remains entrenched in what he himself calls the “paradox” of subjectivity, namely, that self-knowledge is limited to the appearance of the self in inner sense, the empirical self. Fichte declares here that for this reason the Principle of Consciousness is in need of a “new foundation”, and this is the germ of the idea of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. The new principle, expressing the *Tathandlung* which

¹⁹⁴ FEPW, 67; SW I: 11.

¹⁹⁵ FEPW, 64; SW I: 8. I will prefer in future to leave the neologism “*Tathandlung*” untranslated. The reasons for calling it a *Tathandlung* rather than simply a *Handlung* [act or activity] are complex; but provisionally, it is meant to suggest that the activity has an existence which “stands on its own”, that is, is precisely *not* conceived as an activity *inhering* in or an activity *of* some *prior* object which exists independently of the activity anyway. Fichte says of the *Tathandlung* that it is “a pure activity [*Tätigkeit*] that *presupposes no object*, but itself produces it, and in which, accordingly, the *acting* [*das Handeln*] immediately becomes a *fact* [*Tat*]”. IWL, 51; SW I: 468; translation amended, emphases added.

¹⁹⁶ FEPW 63; SW I: 7-8; emphases added.

grounds all representation as such, Fichte here calls “the absolute subject, the I” which is “not given by empirical intuition; it is, instead, posited by intellectual intuition”¹⁹⁷.

Before we explore what Fichte means by this, I want to dwell for a moment on three further core Fichtean ideas that are present already in the *Aenesidemus* review—one implicit and the other two explicit—that will have crucial significance for our later discussion. The first is related to what Dieter Henrich has referred to as Fichte’s “original insight”, namely the inadequacy of what he calls the “reflective theory of self-consciousness”¹⁹⁸. Such a theory attempts to explain self-consciousness as the *result* of consciousness turning back on itself and turning itself into its own object. In Henrich’s words:

This theory begins by assuming a subject of thinking and emphasizes that this subject stands in a constant relationship to itself. It then goes on to assert that this relationship is the result of the subject’s making itself into its own object; in other words, the activity of representing, which is originally related to objects, is turned back upon itself and in this way produces *the unique case* of an identity between the activity and the result of the activity.¹⁹⁹

Henrich claims that such a theory must of necessity be viciously circular, because it attempts to *explain* self-consciousness as the *result* of directing one’s attention onto oneself as an object, but in order to determine if such a directing of attention is successful, then I must already have a *criterion* of success, that is, I must already *be* self-conscious. I must already know myself if I am to be sure that, in reflecting, I have correctly directed my attention—“originally” directed towards “objects”—*to myself*, to the particular object that is *me*. For Henrich, Fichte’s theory of subjectivity should be understood as fundamentally motivated by a recognition of the inadequacy and circularity

¹⁹⁷ FEPW 65; SW I:10.

¹⁹⁸ See “Fichte’s Original Insight”, hereafter abbreviated as FOI.

¹⁹⁹ FOI, 19. emphasis added.

of such a conception of self-consciousness and the effort to avoid it. Simply put, Fichte wants to show that self-consciousness must be rooted in a more fundamental self-relation, in which the identity of the *activity* and the *result* of activity is not itself merely the *result* of the activity of reflection, but rather in which the (prior) identity *makes* the reflective relation to oneself as an object itself possible.

I think this characterization is correct and helpful as far as it goes, but I'd like to emphasize another, closely related, point. As Henrich characterizes it in the quote above, the reflective theory fails not *just* because it is circular, but because it is in principle incapable of giving an adequate characterization of the "self" which becomes self-conscious in the way it attempts to explain. In granting that the self attempts to "locate" itself as a particular type of represented object *by means of* a reflective activity, that is, in turning "away" or "back" from "objects" toward the particular object that is the self, the self-reverting self never *really* manages to fully find *itself*, namely, itself *qua reflective activity*. In representing itself as an *object* at all, it perpetually "mislocates" itself, because "it" must be not just the represented object that *results from* its reflective activity, but also the activity itself. This means that the reflective theory never actually manages to produce "the identity between the activity and the result of the activity" at all. Henrich recognizes this problem when he says that the reflective theory essentially "makes the mistake of representing the Self merely as one object among others."²⁰⁰ Thus we can identify two conceptually distinct—but closely, perhaps essentially, related—shortcomings of the reflective theory, namely its vicious circularity and its "category mistake".

²⁰⁰ FOI, 21. I believe that this point is also related to Henrich's abiding theme in the essay regarding the reflective theory's inability to account for the "intelligibility" of the I, and Fichte's (ultimately unsuccessful for Henrich) attempt to account for this intelligibility.

It is very instructive in this context to consider the extent to which we can attribute the reflective theory to Kant himself. Henrich is not entirely clear about this.²⁰¹ Kant in fact seems to escape the first sense of the theory's shortcoming while falling prey to the latter. This illuminates the revolutionary character of his conception of self-consciousness as well as the sense in which Kant did not carry the revolution far enough. The doctrine of the unity of apperception—that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations—seems precisely designed to avoid the reflective theory's "circularity". In demonstrating in the Deduction that all representing activity—or "judging"—as such is subject to the condition of pure apperceptive unity, the a priori *self-relatedness* required for the possibility of empirical self-consciousness (actually attaching the 'I think' to the judgment) *is built into* the synthetic activity which itself grounds objective experience, judgments about objects in outer sense. Relation to objects already necessarily includes a self-relation. But while avoiding this first shortcoming, Kant seems to make the mistake of mislocation here. In limiting our knowledge of the self to its appearance to itself, that is, to the self as *object* of *inner* sense—the temporally ordered succession of representations—*both* the possible "reflective" activity qua activity of actually attaching the 'I think' to the judgment, *as well as* the original synthetic activity involved in the judging itself, are lost, no longer part of what is represented in self-consciousness.

In a *locus classicus* for these issues, Kant in fact himself goes a little further. This lengthy passage will be crucial for our understanding of Fichte, so it is worth quoting in full:

²⁰¹ He says that his description of the theory is one that "all of Kant's *predecessors*" would have identified with, but also that it "remains the dominant idea of the Self, even in the Critical Philosophy". I think Kant is hard to pin down here precisely because, as Henrich says, "Kant did not see it as philosophy's task to interpret the structure of the Self". I would amend this sentiment by saying that Kant did not see it as part of his task *in the first Critique* to interpret the structure of the self.

The **I think** expresses the act of determining my existence. The existence is thereby given, but the way in which I am to determinate it, i.e., the manifold that I am to posit in myself as belonging to it, is not thereby given. For that self-intuition is required, which is grounded in an *a priori* given form, i.e. time, which is sensible and belongs to the receptivity of the determinable. Now I do not have yet another self-intuition, which would give the **determining** in me, the spontaneity of which alone I am conscious, *even before* the act of **determination**, in the same way as time gives that which is to be determined, thus I *cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being* [*eines selbsttätigen Wesens*], rather I *merely represent the spontaneity of my thought*, i.e., of the determining, and my existence always remains only sensibly determinable, i.e., determinable as the existence of an appearance. Yet this spontaneity is the reason I call myself an **intelligence**.²⁰²

Here Kant denies that I can “*determine my existence as a self-active being*”, while at the same time claiming that I *represent* the spontaneity (which is the same as “self-activity”) of my thought, i.e. of my determining. On the one hand, the self which is reflectively represented—in empirical apperception—is a type of object, i.e. the object of inner sense. This falls prey to the second shortcoming in that it is “representing the Self as merely one object among others”.²⁰³ If self-consciousness is the (reflective) determination of an *object*, spontaneity is not one of the object’s determinate properties. I cannot *empirically* determine myself *as a self-active being*.²⁰⁴ Self-activity is simply not an empirical property of objects. But Kant in fact seems to be trying to avoid the second shortcoming of the reflective theory here by insisting that, *along with* the sensible (i.e. temporal) determination of myself as the object of inner sense, I *also* represent the spontaneity of the determining.

²⁰² KRV B157fn., italics added.

²⁰³ I should be clear here that there is nothing odious about representing the *empirical* self as an object; what the critique of the reflective theory is concerned about is the absence of the element of determining in the empirical picture of the determinable self.

²⁰⁴ This is of course a point with which Fichte will *agree*. To anticipate: Fichte does in fact think we must have “another self-intuition” in which the determining in me is given, but it is NOT given *before* the act of determination, as Kant suggests it must be.

But this solution can look *ad hoc*. Besides the difficulty of understanding the *inner relation* between these two representations—the representation of the spontaneity of the determining self on the one hand and of the sensibly determined (or determinable) self on the other—there is the further problem of just what *kind of representation* the representation of *spontaneity*—which is being appended in some manner to the sensibly determined representation—is, and how it comes about, in the first place. It is clearly not an empirical representation, so it is neither an empirical concept nor a sensible intuition; it is neither a pure intuition (e.g. space, time) nor a pure concept (a category); Kant doesn't call it an idea or a postulate either. Indeed, it seems to be a unique kind of representation for Kant, one which he never explicitly thematizes.²⁰⁵ As we will see, Fichte's theory of "intellectual intuition" is designed to establish and make intelligible this awareness of the spontaneity of one's synthetic activity as well as the inner relationship between this latter awareness of activity and the *determinacy* of the activity itself.

The second and third issues regarding the *Aenesidemus* review are closely related. We have seen that Schulze's criticisms of Reinhold motivated Fichte to propose another first principle of philosophy, namely that of the absolute I, which he conceived of as a certain kind of spontaneous, self-relating activity, which he calls *self-positing*. This conception is seen as necessitated by Kant's own way of treating theoretical subjectivity. Now,

²⁰⁵ Kant suggests in this *Reflexion* that the representation of the spontaneity of the determining arises from (or within) what he here calls "transcendental consciousness": "The consciousness *when* I institute an experience is the representation of my existence insofar as it is empirically determined, i.e. in time. Now *if this consciousness were itself in turn empirical*, then this temporal determination, as contained under the conditions of the temporal determination of my state, *would in turn have to be represented*...which is absurd. However, the consciousness *of* instituting an experience or also of thinking in general is a **transcendental consciousness, not experience**." R 5561, in *Notes and Fragments*, edited by Guyer, p. 290; my italics.

Fichte thinks that this conception of the absolute I directly entails two further claims: i) the incoherence of the notion of the thing in itself; and ii) the “absolute self-sufficiency and independence” of the absolute I. Both of these issues are intended to be closely related to what I will call the “transcendental circle”. Fichte repeatedly insists in the review that (transcendental) consciousness is trapped inside of a “circle”—this time a “virtuous” one—a point which is allegedly a direct consequence of the metaphysical move to deny any kind of thing-hood to subjectivity. Immediately after locating the weakness of Schulze’s skeptical criticism in the latter’s assuming that the faculty of representation must be some kind of thing, Fichte writes that:

The faculty of representation exists *for* the faculty of representation and *through* the faculty of representation: this is the circle with which every finite understanding, that is, every understanding that we can conceive, is necessarily confined.²⁰⁶

This is Fichte’s way of interpreting the meaning of Kant’s transcendental idealism.²⁰⁷

Everything, all possible objects of representation in addition to the absolute I itself, as the a priori ground of all representation, “exists” only *for the I*, that is, **can be conceived of by the I as existing only in relation to the I**. Like Kant, this transcendental idealism is also supposed to be understood as a form of empirical realism; but, ostensibly unlike Kant²⁰⁸, Fichte thinks that this very fact nullifies any possible reference to the thing in itself, or the thing abstracted from any relationship to an I.

²⁰⁶ FEPW 67; SW I: 11.

²⁰⁷ This issue is related to what Ameriks’ calls Fichte’s “short argument” for idealism. See, e.g., *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.

²⁰⁸ Although, of course, characteristically (especially in his early works), Fichte here insists both that the circle was “discovered” by Kant himself; and that, although Kant’s language seems to “authorize” the distinction between appearances and things in themselves, Kant intended the distinction to have “validity only provisionally and *only for him* [!]”.

[A]ll that is not-I *is* for the I only; the not-I obtains all of the determinations of this being a priori only through its relation to an I; however, all of these determinations, insofar as they can be known a priori, become absolutely necessary upon the mere condition of a relation between a not-I and any I at all. *From this it would follow* that the notion of a thing in itself, to the extent that this is supposed to be a not-I which is not opposed to any I, is *self-contradictory*, and that the thing is actually constituted in itself in just that way in which it must be thought to be constituted by any conceivable intelligent I.²⁰⁹

Because it is self-contradictory, Fichte declares that it is “straightforwardly impossible [*geradezu unmöglich*] to think of a thing independent of any faculty of representation at all”, and that the thing in itself is therefore “a non-thought [*ein Nicht-Gedanke*]”. One possible reason for this is deceptively simple: to *think* of a thing existing independently of any relation to a thinking (representing) I is to put it into just such a relation. The self-contradiction is performative: in thinking the thing in itself, I am putting it into a relation to myself; in *this* sense it is “mind-dependent”. We can generalize the point in the following way: the *concept* of “mind-independence” is itself mind-dependent (simply because it’s a *concept*).²¹⁰

There are a host of interpretative issues and worries which would have to be addressed here in providing a robust interpretation of Kant’s and Fichte’s particular versions of “idealism”, and the exact relationship between them. I will not be attempting to definitively decide these issues here. But I want initially to distinguish between two broad ways of reading Fichte’s notion of the “transcendental circle” here. As I’ve presented it, it can seem that the point is fairly minimal. We can call it the thesis of *epistemic*, or *weak*, mind-dependence. This does in fact seem to be an intrinsic presupposition of transcendental philosophy. But it’s not at all clear what else is

²⁰⁹ FEPW 73-74; SW I: 20; translation amended, my emphases.

²¹⁰ I owe this particular way of putting the point to Markus Gabriel.

supposed to follow from this. In particular, it doesn't of course *entail* that there *are* no things which exist or could exist independently of my or anyone else's mind, that is, it doesn't entail that in the absence of minds, nothing exists (though of course, in the absence of minds, nothing can be *said* to exist). An interpretation of mind-dependence which did insist that these latter things are entailed by the circle would amount to what we can call an *ontological*, or *strong*, notion of mind-dependence²¹¹.

But there is an intermediate position possible here between the weaker and stronger positions. Even acknowledging that the circle does not entail the robust ontological notion of mind-dependence—that the circle does not rule out that there can be things “existing anyway” independently of any relation to an I—one might think that the circle does entail that the things which “exist anyway” can make *no* contribution to our determinate experience. At times this seems to be Fichte's position. He writes, for example, that “if things in themselves, independently of our faculty of representation, are *unable to produce any determinations whatsoever in us*, then we can very well know that they are not responsible for the determinations actually present in us now.”²¹² This is why he says, as we will see presently, “the necessity is assumed to have its foundation *totally* in our mind”.

We can distinguish then between three different interpretations of the notion of mind-dependence which might be taken to follow from the transcendental circle.

²¹¹ Using “epistemic” and “ontological” here to mark the distinction is potentially misleading, because I have already been arguing for, and attributing to Fichte, the claim that the “circle” itself gives us reasons for considering *subjectivity* as having a unique ontological status; what is at the center of the issue here is the relationship to the “not-I”, however. Another way of putting the point is to note that *for* the case of the thinking I, there *is no* such distinction to be drawn, and this just because the I must be seen as self-constituting, in the way I will discuss later.

²¹² FEPW, 69, SW I:14; italics added.

- 1) a “*weak*” interpretation, according to which all that follows is that subjectivity is *sui generis* (for reasons we will see in a moment) or rather, that there is necessary asymmetry between the I and the not-I; but an asymmetry according to which it does not follow that things cannot “exist anyway” and in their own right outside of a relation to an I
- 2) a “*weak-strong*” interpretation—or a weaker version of the strong interpretation—according to which it follows that “what exists anyway” cannot make any contribution to or play any role in our determinate experience²¹³
- 3) a (robustly) “*strong*” interpretation, according to which it follows that nothing does or can “exist anyway” outside of any relation to an I

It is very difficult to discern which of these claims Fichte’s form of idealism is committed to; I have described that idealism as ambiguous because I think it’s possible to provide an interpretation of his idealism according to each of them, though with varying degrees of effort.²¹⁴ Ultimately, I will be suggesting that the second and third are more plausible as interpretations of Fichte’s idealism, and that the third is the most likely candidate. This ambiguity will cause problems for how we interpret the core notion of *self-constitution* as well. But for now, I want to remark that even the weakest claim can give us further resources for articulating the asymmetry between the notions of the “thing in itself” and the “noumenal self” which we discussed in sections on Kant. This asymmetry was one of the reasons motivating the idea of a “metaphysics of subjectivity” in the first place. The weakest claim admits that although *thinking* the thing in itself necessarily puts it into relation to the thinking I, which must, as thinking, *determine* it, and thus makes it

²¹³ Some version of this claim seems to motivate the Sellarsian attack on the “Myth of the Given”, insofar as the attack does not deny that some things are given, but just that “given-ness” cannot play a (justificatory) role in experience. McDowell, for instance, wants to argue for the “unboundedness of the conceptual” but still insist on some kind of “external constraint”. See, e.g. McDowell, *Mind and World*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996; esp. Lecture II; and “Self-Determining Subjectivity and External Constraint”, included in *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel and Sellars*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009.

²¹⁴ As we have seen, Pippin, in attributing to Fichte the key insights of the Sellarsian, and by extension, McDowellian and Brandomian line of thought, seems to be insisting on the second. See, for example, his “Fichte’s Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism”; included in Sedgwick, ed., *The Reception of Kant’s Critical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.

“dependent” on the I in some sense, at least in the case of cognition; this *does* seem to entail that a *thinking I cannot* “exist anyway” outside of a relation to a thinking I, that is, to itself. We can understand Kant in the Deduction to have argued that the thinking I precisely *must* exist in this kind of self-relation, or self-determination. For Fichte, this means that the thinking I is *originally* self-relating, it is a necessary condition of subjectivity as such. It is just this asymmetry which points toward the metaphysically sui generis character of subjectivity, and moves us away from conceiving it as “one kind of object among others”.

Finally, in the *Aenesidemus* review, Fichte makes the seemingly bald claim that the self-positing I is “absolutely self-sufficient and independent [*schlechthin selbständig und unabhängig*]”²¹⁵. This claim is closely tied to the idea of the “transcendental circle” as well. Indeed, he suggests that with Kant’s “discovery of the circle”, we have “already arrived [!] at absolute autonomy [*Autonomie*]”²¹⁶. Fichte is explicit that the validity of this claim must be understood relatively to the circle itself: “the absolute existence and autonomy of the I...is valid only *for the I itself*, [and is not] valid *in itself*”²¹⁷. But this does not itself clarify why Fichte thinks there is a necessary connection between conceiving of the I as always “within the circle” and conceiving of the I as self-sufficient.

Should we perhaps seek a still higher foundation for that necessity which is assumed to have its foundation totally in our mind? Should this unconditional necessity which is discovered in our minds be conditioned by being derived from, explained, and comprehended in terms of something higher? And where should we look for this higher foundation? Within us, where *we have already arrived at*

²¹⁵ FEPW 75; SW I: 22; translation amended.

²¹⁶ FEPW 69; SW I:15. Fichte seems in this essay to be using these concepts—“independent”, “self-sufficient”, “autonomous”—interchangeably.

²¹⁷ FEPW 71; SW I:17.

absolute autonomy? Should absolute autonomy be based upon something else? This is *self-contradictory*.²¹⁸

Fichte seems to be saying that the pure I must be self-sufficient because, given the “circle”, there is no other possible candidate for self-sufficiency. But acknowledging the “circle” seems to commit one to the self-sufficiency of the I *only* on the basis of (i) the assumption that something *must* be self-sufficient after all, that is, that we must locate self-sufficiency somewhere; and (ii) some version of the strong reading [either (2) or (3) above] of the thesis of mind-dependence that the “circle” allegedly entails. The self-sufficiency of the I follows *directly* from the “transcendental circle” *only* on a reading of the latter which is stronger than the weak, minimal one. And we have as yet been given no real reason to assume such a stronger reading. In fact Fichte’s strategy in the review for demonstrating the self-sufficiency of the I is a little more nuanced. He goes on:

It is precisely the *task* of the Critical Philosophy *to show*...that everything that occurs in our mind can be completely explained and comprehended on the basis of the mind itself...This philosophy points out to us that circle from which we cannot escape. *Within this circle*, on the other hand, it furnishes us with the greatest coherence in all our knowledge.²¹⁹

Here Fichte indeed seems to be claiming that while the “circle” itself is enough to *suggest* to us that the I *must* be self-sufficient, we cannot *prove* this until we have actually carried out the task of “explaining everything on the basis of the mind itself”, that is, “within” the circle. I will call this Fichte’s “proof of the pudding” strategy; he develops it further and employs it more explicitly in the so-called “New Presentation [*Neue Darstellung*]” of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of the period 1796-98.²²⁰

²¹⁸ FEPW 69; SW I: 15.

²¹⁹ FEPW 69; SW I:15. my emphases.

²²⁰ The “New Presentation” was never completed: we have extant two introductions and a single chapter. My discussion of Fichte henceforth, with one exception, will focus on this period of Fichte’s development;

Fichte declares in the introductions to the “New Presentation” that the task of philosophy in general is to “display [*angeben*]” the “basis or foundation [*Grund*]” of all experience, and that, simply because it seeks the *ground* of experience, philosophy’s “object” must necessarily “lie outside” of all experience.²²¹ Accordingly, Fichte thinks, there are only two possible ways of conceiving of the object of philosophy, and thus essentially only two forms that philosophy can take. Philosophy begins with an abstraction which separates what is necessarily connected within experience, namely “the thing” from “the intellect”. “Idealism” and what Fichte calls “dogmatism” are distinguished by which of these is taken to be the “explanatory ground of experience [*Erklärungsgrund der Erfahrung*]”. Idealism takes at its explanatory ground the intellect in abstraction from its relationship to experience, and dogmatism takes as its explanatory ground the thing in abstraction from its being experienced, i.e. the thing in itself. It is clear that Fichte considers the idealistic point of view to be a direct result of accepting the Copernican Revolution or “transcendental turn”: it represents the desire “to accomplish a complete reversal [*Umkehrung*] in the way we think about these issues, so that—in all seriousness and not simply as a figure of speech—the object will be posited and determined by our power of cognition”²²².

Now, Fichte famously says that the initial choice between these two ways of proceeding cannot be decided ahead of time on rational grounds, and that each point of view is incapable of directly refuting the other; rather the “choice” depends on “what

but as has become common, I will be treating the additional texts such as the lecture transcripts known as the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methoda*, and the *Sittenlehre*, as belonging to this same period.

²²¹ SW I: 423–425. Fichte says that this follows analytically, i.e. “from the mere thought of a ‘ground’”.

²²² IWL 5; SW I: 421; translation amended.

kind of person one is”.²²³ The *proof* of the correctness of the respective standpoint can only come about through the actual carrying out of the project which each has set for itself—in the “eating of the pudding”, so to speak. Interestingly, despite these provisos, Fichte takes the project which dogmatism has set for itself to be in principle impossible. In line with the way Fichte sets things up, dogmatism is the attempt to explain experience on the basis of the thing in itself, understood as the thing in abstraction from experience. Dogmatism’s inadequacy can be demonstrated straightaway, Fichte thinks, because “experience” must at least minimally mean that something is taken *for* something *by* an I.

A thing...may possess a variety of different features; but if we ask, “*For whom* is it what it is?”, no one who understands our question will answer that “it exists *for itself*.” Instead, an intellect also has to be thought of in this case, an intellect for which the thing in question exists. The intellect, in contrast, necessarily is *for itself* whatever it is...Through its being-posited as an intelligence, that *for which it is* is already posited along with it [*Durch ihr Gesetzseyn, als Intelligenz, ist das, für welches sie sey, schon mit gesetzt*].²²⁴

In taking “things” as basic, dogmatism can never explain the “for-the-I” structure of experience, *nor* can it arrive at a conception of or explanation for the unique feature of “an intelligence”, namely that **it** *is* what it is **necessarily** *for itself*. Fichte says, “[y]ou will not be able to obtain an intellect unless you also think of it as primary and absolute”²²⁵. The suggestion here is that the unique ontological feature of subjectivity, the “object” of idealism, is its *self-constituting* structure, acknowledgment of which is necessitated by the (Copernican) revolutionary motivation behind “idealism”—its intent

²²³ IWL 20; SW I: 434. “Was für eine Philosophie man wähle, hängt sonach davon ab, was man für ein Mensch ist“. Although I will be not focusing on this provocative, *ad hominem* element of Fichte’s argumentation, I think it bears on an ambiguity I will discuss shortly, namely whether “intellectual intuition” is a general accomplishment of all subjectivity as such, or only the philosopher’s insight. It seems at times that Fichte is implying that the dogmatist, *in refusing to acknowledge* the freedom and self-sufficiency of his intellect, *actually lacks* these things.

²²⁴ IWL 21; SW I: 436; translation amended, emphases added.

²²⁵ IWL 22; SW I: 437; translation amended.

to “reverse” our way of thinking—and which can only be accounted for and made intelligible *by and within* that viewpoint.

Idealism thus has an “advantage” over dogmatism, Fichte says, in that “it is able to demonstrate [*nachweisen*] within consciousness the foundation it wishes to employ in its explanation of experience, viz. the freely acting intellect”²²⁶; but idealism must still make good on its promise by demonstrating that experience itself can be grounded in the freely acting intellect. This involves demonstrating that “all of the laws of the intellect”, i.e. its *determinate* modes of acting, are in fact derivable “from the very nature of the intellect”.

If the presupposition idealism makes is correct, and if it has inferred correctly in the course of its derivations, then as its final result...it must arrive at the system of all necessary representations. In other words, its result must be equivalent to experience as a whole.²²⁷

My aim here is not to explicate how such a derivation is supposed to work in its details. What I am interested in is the connection Fichte makes between the metaphysical status of the I and the question of the self-sufficiency of the I. Fichte here seems to be *straightforwardly* equating the claim that the I is self-constituting and the claim that it is self-sufficient.

The dispute between the idealist and the dogmatist is actually a dispute over whether the self-sufficiency of the I should be sacrificed to that of the thing, or conversely, whether the self-sufficiency of the thing should be sacrificed to that of the I.

[T]he self-sufficiency of the I itself cannot co-exist with that of the thing. Only one of these two can come first; only one can be the starting point; only one can be independent.²²⁸

²²⁶ IWL15; SW I: 430; translation amended.

²²⁷ IWL 31; SW I: 446.

²²⁸ IWL 17; SW I: 432.

A commitment to the self-sufficiency of the I is built into the idealist standpoint from the very beginning for Fichte. The dogmatist is fundamentally characterized by a denial of the self-sufficiency of the I, *from which* the Idealist, however, *constructs his system* [*Er läugnet die Selbständigkeit des Ich, auf welche der Idealist baut, gänzlich ab*]²²⁹. Now, there is a sense in which this might seem, internal to the idealist standpoint, innocuous. It exhibits the same circular structure and enacts the same “proof of the pudding” strategy as the assumption of the sui generis character of the I. The Idealist must begin by assuming the self-sufficiency of the I, even though he is only able to validate this assumption by actually performing the derivation of the kind required.

But I want to emphasize again that the thesis of the sui generis character of the I, namely that it is “absolutely” “for itself” and self-constituting, does not *itself* entail that we must think of the I as self-sufficient. As I’ve noted, it does so only if we think that the I’s metaphysically sui generis character commits us to the mind-dependence of all content of thought, not just in the sense of its *determinate* existence for the I, but in its existence tout court, or at least to the claim that the thing’s “independent existence” *makes no contribution* whatsoever to the content of the thought, to the determinate character it actually has for the I. So in fact, Fichte seems in the “New Presentation” to be committing himself to one of the strong versions of the claim of mind-dependence. This is suggested by Fichte’s response to the charge made by Reinhold that he is guilty of just this move. Reinhold puts the concern in this way:

With respect to its transcendental content (which constitutes only the *form* of empirical cognition), such cognition has its foundations *solely* within the *pure* I;

²²⁹ IWL 16; SW I: 431.

but with respect to its empirical content, by means of which it possesses objective reality, it must be grounded within the I *by something different* from the I.²³⁰

Reinhold is of course appealing to the orthodox Kantian conception of the necessity of the *receptive* moment in cognition. Fichte's response is instructive:

When you posit an object that is accompanied by the thought that it has exercised an effect upon you, then you also think of yourself as *affected in this case*. And when you think that this is what occurs in the case of *every* object you perceive, then you think of yourself as *generally affectable*. In other words, it is *by means of this act of your own thinking* [*durch dieses dein Denken*] that you ascribe receptivity or sensibility to yourself. Thus the object considered as something given is *also only something thought of* [*auch nur gedacht*].²³¹

It is natural to assume that Fichte's insistence here on the faculty of receptivity being something "merely" self-ascribed is a commitment to one of the strong claims of mind-dependence. It is *possible* to interpret it according to the "minimal" view. Receptivity or affectability, *given-ness*, is mind-dependent solely because the *thought* that I am receptive is itself mind-dependent, because it's a *thought*. Everything depends on what "by means of" and "only" mean here. Under the strictly minimal reading, Fichte is almost trading on tautologies here. Of course I *ascribe* receptivity to myself *by* (means of) thinking I am receptive; of course, *considered* as given, the object is "only" a thought.²³² But such language decidedly lends itself to stronger connotations. If receptivity is "only" self-ascribed, then I am not receptive *to* anything "really" distinct from the I in any sense. "All of our cognition does indeed begin with an affection, but not with an affection *by an*

²³⁰ Quoted in IWL 65; SW I: 480.

²³¹ IWL 73; SW I: 488.

²³² This distorts the German a little, but the point remains intact. Fichte simply uses the passive, "So wird der Gegenstand als gegeben auch nur gedacht."

object”, but rather by “the act of positing a not-I”.²³³ We see the ambiguity repeated here:

It is only in *his own* name [i.e. from the (idealist) standpoint of philosophy] that the philosopher asserts that “everything that exists for the I exists *by means of* the I”. The I that is described within his philosophy, however, asserts that “just as truly as I exist and live at all, there also exists something outside of me, something that does not owe its existence to me”. Basing his account upon the first principle of his philosophy, the philosopher explains how the I comes to make such an assertion.²³⁴

Fichte is relying on a distinction here perhaps more explicitly and clearly drawn in the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*—namely the distinction between the absolute I on the one hand, and the finite or limited I, or the I of *theoretical* subjectivity on the other.²³⁵ It belongs to the task of *deriving* experience from the (initially presupposed) ground of experience that an explanation is given as to why it is *necessary for the finite I* to assume that its objects exist independently of it. Fichte here ascribes the former to that which is seen from the standpoint of *speculation*, and the latter to that which is seen (or experienced) from the standpoint of *life*. Although, Fichte claims, the standpoint of life is *only comprehensible* [*begreiflich*] from the standpoint of speculation, the latter exists in the first place *only* to make the former comprehensible. This leaves open a possible interpretation of Fichte’s brand of idealism according to which the standpoint of speculation—which is here necessitated by the transcendental circularity of thought—does not describe, as it were, the “metaphysical truth of the matter” regarding the “independent existence” of things, but rather a necessary standpoint undertaken in order to make such a thought “comprehensible”. My claim is that Fichte’s understanding of what counts as success

²³³ IWL 74; SW I: 488.

²³⁴ IWL 38 fn.; SW I: 455.

²³⁵ The 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre* is translated into English by Peter Heath and John Lachs as *The Science of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982.

here in the task of “making comprehensible” goes hand in hand with how we understand the issue of the *self-sufficiency* of the I which is evoked in the explanation.

I have been attempting to show that Fichte seems to understand the self-sufficiency of the I as something one is immediately committed to once one has followed Kant in his “transcendental turn”, that is, he immediately connects the idealist move toward a metaphysical account of self-constituting subjectivity with a claim regarding that subjectivity’s self-sufficiency. Part of my account of self-constitution, to which I now turn, is intended to show that the claim that it is the self-constitution of the I which marks it as metaphysically *sui generis* is conceptually separable from the claim regarding the self-sufficiency of the I. One could put the point as follows: the idea that the I is trapped in the “circle” in which everything exists “for the I”, including the I, in fact commits us to a certain ontological stance vis-à-vis ourselves, but does not itself entail any specific ontological commitments vis-à-vis the ultimate mind-dependence of things, and that the circle is connected with the self-sufficiency of the I only if other ontological commitments are added on from “outside the circle”.

2) The Metaphysics of Subjectivity as Self-Constitution

We have seen from the discussion of the *Aenesidemus* review that Fichte thinks that the problems inherent in conceiving of subjectivity along the lines of a particular type of “thing”—the bad circularity of the reflective theory of self-consciousness, for example—require us to conceive of subjectivity rather as distinctively characterized by a certain type of self-related *activity*. This kind of self-activity which is a sui generis feature of subjectivity can be described as the activity of *self-constitution*²³⁶. Fichte in the “New Presentation” refers to this self-relation as a “self-reverting [*in sich zurückgehende*] activity”, which avoids the explanatory circularity of the reflective theory by asserting that the I “originally comes into being for itself by means of this activity, and it is only in this way that the I comes into being at all.”²³⁷ Such self-constitution avoids the circularity of the reflective theory because here the I has no being prior to the activity itself, and its “being” is constituted by that very activity. “Idealism considers the intellect [the I] to be a kind of *doing* [*ein Thun*] and *absolutely nothing more*. One should not even call it an *active subject* [*ein Thätiges*], for such an appellation suggests the presence of something that continues to exist and in which an activity inheres.”²³⁸

²³⁶ I am following Frederick Neuhouser in this appellation; see, eg. FTS p. 102ff.

²³⁷ IWL 42; SW I: 459.

²³⁸ IWL 26; SE I: 440; emphases added. Though Fichte is not entirely consistent in this usage, there is a sense in which “being” cannot be ascribed to the I at all. Just prior to this passage he claims the intellect “has no real being, no subsistence or continuing existence”; later he writes that “it possesses only an *ideal* being”, i.e. an “objectivity *for* mere thinking” (IWL 80). This way of talking emphasizes the metaphysical sui generis character of subjectivity. He says, “Acting is not being, and being is not acting” (IWL 45), which he adds, is true by the *definition* of acting. What marks subjectivity qua activity from things is precisely that the former *is only* for itself, the I *is only* for the I. It *is* its self-relating.

As I have mentioned, the core of this Fichtean idea is contained in Kant's notion of the original synthetic unity of apperception in the Transcendental Deduction.²³⁹ We now must return to the *locus classicus* mentioned above. Kant says that the "I think expresses *the act of determining my existence*". Theoretical subjectivity is "self-determining" or self-constituting in this sense. In its theoretical synthetic activity, which unifies the manifold of intuition according to pure apperception, the determining I also determines itself with regard to its existence ("the existence is *thereby* [*dadurch*] given", i.e., through or by means of the act itself). Now, as we have seen, Kant says both that I cannot thereby also represent the (determining) I as a self-active *being* [*selbsttätiges Wesen*], but I *nevertheless* represent the spontaneity of the activity. In order to be able to so represent the former, I would need to be in possession of a non-sensible intuition.

Now the question must inevitably arise regarding where the "representation" of the spontaneity of the self-determining activity then comes from. Fichte famously attributes it to "intellectual intuition", which *looks* like he is simply attributing to us a faculty which Kant baldly denies that we have. Several comments are in order here. Firstly, Fichte is *agreeing* with Kant that the putative non-sensible form of intuition is incapable of representing the I as "*ein selbsttätiges Wesen*" if the latter means a kind of *thing* which possesses the property of being self-active. This is the point of avoiding even calling it "*ein Thätiges*". But we can read Fichte as wanting to give a story about how, nevertheless, the representation of the *spontaneity* of the activity arises, that is, how we are, or can become, *aware* of the spontaneity of the self-activity which characterizes the (theoretical) I's self-constitution.

²³⁹ Fichte himself says Kant "does not mention [it] (except, perhaps, under the name 'pure apperception')". IWL 56.

There can seem then that there are simply two issues here: the first is simply the I's self-constituting self-activity itself, and the second is the question of how the I *becomes aware* of that self-activity through which it constitutes itself. Indeed, there is a basic ambiguity throughout the "New Presentation" regarding Fichte's usage of the term "intellectual intuition" which tracks this very distinction. At the outset, it is important to note that Fichte takes great pains there to justify his use of the term in light of Kant's explicit denial of it. Fichte insists that he is using the term to mean something entirely different than what Kant meant by it. *Because*, Fichte says, all intuition is for Kant "directed at a being", intellectual intuition refers to, for Kant, "a consciousness of a non-sensible *being*, an immediate consciousness *of the thing in itself*" which is then—echoing the traditional ascription of intellectual intuition to the "divine consciousness"—considered as "made possible by thought alone", which would then "amount to a creation [*ein Erschaffen*] of the thing in itself simply from the concept of it".²⁴⁰ Fichte avoids this conception of intellectual intuition primarily because though the latter is indeed for him a kind of immediate awareness, it is not an immediate awareness of a *thing in itself*, simply because the activity of which the intuition is aware is not a *thing* at all, let alone a thing *in itself*. It is then a self-awareness *of an activity*. But at the same time, since the activity in question is an activity which is meant to be self-constituting, it looks like the claim is that the I *creates* itself in its activity. But it is important to be very specific about what the I is creating in its activity. Fichte says that the I "originally comes into being for itself by means of this activity [*Erst durch diesen Act...wird das Ich ursprünglich für sich selbst*]."

²⁴⁰ IWL 55; SW I: 471-472. Indeed, at the very beginning of the Aesthetic, Kant defines intuition as an *immediate* relation to an *object* [*Gegenstand*]. And it is true that for the most part, excepting the allusion in the footnote to the Deduction just discussed, Kant characterizes intellectual intuition as a non-sensible grasp of the thing in itself, e.g. in the positive (and nugatory) conception of the noumenon as intelligible object.

Only in the activity does the I “originally” *become for itself*. What is being created in the activity is the “being for itself” or the “being for the I” of the I, viz. the I’s *self-relation*, which is supposed to be, after all, just what the I *is*.

The ambiguity I mentioned in Fichte’s notion of intellectual intuition—intellectual intuition as the activity *itself* qua self-constituting, and intellectual intuition as the *awareness* of the activity, i.e. as the faculty or means by which the activity becomes an item of the I’s “self-knowledge”—maps onto Fichte’s distinction in the “New Presentation” between the standpoint of “life” and the standpoint of “speculation”. These *seem* to be straightforwardly different claims, namely that intellectual intuition is on the one hand the means by which the I constitutes itself, and the means by which the I is *aware*, or *knows*, that it constitutes itself, on the other. Thus Fichte seems to be ascribing to intellectual intuition two distinct *roles*. Of course, if intellectual intuition is associated with the self-constituting activity itself, and if the latter is the sui generis feature of subjectivity, then intellectual intuition better be, as Fichte indeed says, “present in every moment of consciousness”²⁴¹, i.e. it must be conceived of as an a priori condition, and thus constitutive of, consciousness in general. But this does not require that the activity itself become an explicit item of awareness. Recall that according to Kant’s conception of pure apperception, the I think—which “*expresses*” the activity of self-determination—must *be able* to accompany all of my representations, not that it always actually must. A minimal necessary condition of any synthetic unity of a manifold is the *possibility* of attaching the I think to representations, that is, the ability to recognize—or be aware of in some sense—that the representations are *mine*, belong to

²⁴¹ IWL 46; SW I: 463.

me. We can understand the first sense of intellectual intuition then as this “immediate awareness” of what we can call the “*mineness*” of my representations²⁴², which is a condition of the possibility of actually attaching the I think to my representations. This mineness is engendered by the synthetic activity itself; it makes possible but does not itself necessitate explicit self-ascription of representations to myself. Kant says,

The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong **to me** means, accordingly, the same as that *I unite them* in a self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein, and although it is itself not yet *the consciousness of the synthesis* of the representations, it still presupposes the possibility of the latter.²⁴³

Understood in this way, “intellectual intuition” would be an “accomplishment” of all subjectivity in general qua subjectivity. But Fichte also in a number of places speaks of intellectual intuition as a special awareness which only the (idealist) philosopher “accomplishes”. He says, for example, that “[i]ntellectual intuition’ is the name I give *to the act required of the philosopher: an act of intuiting himself while simultaneously performing the act* by means of which the I originates for him.”²⁴⁴ This makes it seem as if intellectual intuition is not to be immediately *identified* with the activity of self-constitution, but rather with the activity, albeit performed “simultaneously” with the latter, by means of which the philosopher is able to become aware of that very self-constituting activity, which is “happening anyway”, unconsciously, as it were. This impression is strengthened by Fichte’s sometimes talking of intellectual intuition (apparently in this second sense) as an “acting *directed at* an acting”²⁴⁵, or even an

²⁴² Neuhausser calls this “nonrepresentational” or “prereflective” and thus “nondiscursive” self-awareness. See FTS, pp. 68ff.

²⁴³ KRV B134; my italics.

²⁴⁴ IWL 46; SW I: 463; my italics.

²⁴⁵ IWL 42; SW I: 459.

“activity *acting on* an activity”²⁴⁶. The philosopher, he says, is “summoned to engage in a type of inner acting *that depends upon* his own self-activity.”²⁴⁷

We can try to make sense of this apparent bifurcation by pointing out that Fichte insists that intellectual intuition is “always conjoined with some sensory intuition”²⁴⁸, so that “there is no immediate, isolated consciousness of intellectual intuition”. This point squares well with Kant’s approach in the Deduction: the synthetic activity of the unity of apperception is after all a synthesis of the manifold of (*sensible*) intuition. Fichte reads the point of the Deduction then as follows: “sensory intuition is possible only in conjunction with intellectual intuition [in the first sense], since everything that is supposed to be *my* representation must be referred to me”; Fichte then adds, crucially, “but consciousness of the I comes only *from* intellectual intuition [*das Bewußtseyn (Ich) [kommt] aber lediglich aus intellectueller Anschauung*].”²⁴⁹ We might think then that *the philosopher’s* intellectual intuition—of “sheer activity”, Fichte says here—comes simply through an abstraction, of (artificially) separating out what is “intellectual” (the active element) from what is “sensible” (the passive element) within the fundamental *self-relating* of original (apperceptive) synthetic activity. This seems to be Fichte’s point when he describes the origin of the *philosopher’s* “acquaintance” with and “isolated representation” of intellectual intuition as an “*inference* from the obvious facts of consciousness”.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Recall here Kant’s definition of reason as pure self-activity in GMS, which means the activity of reason acting on the activity of the understanding.

²⁴⁷ IWL 45; SW I: 461.

²⁴⁸ IWL 47; SW I: 464.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ IWL 48; SW I: 464-5.

We can put the fundamental problem in the following way: we might try, based on all the things Fichte says about it, to give a unitary “definition” of intellectual intuition as “an immediate self-awareness of self-constituting activity”. But then each the two senses we have been discussing seems to stretch one feature of this definition beyond credulity, to emphasize one aspect while neglecting the other. In the first sense, intellectual intuition refers to the *immediate* self-relating in synthetic activity which I have called “mineness”, but since it can in principle always remain merely implicit, it seems misleading to call it an *awareness* at all, rather than simply something like a formal, structural feature of subjectivity, which, though constitutive of the latter, needn’t ever be raised to the level of explicit awareness. In the second sense, the self-relating activity is explicitly made into an item of awareness *by the philosopher*, but it thereby seems to lose its *immediacy*, and becomes something rather known through an (additional) inference or act of abstraction *from* “what would happen anyway”. In other words, the two features in virtue of which intellectual intuition is an *intuition*, namely that it is both *immediate* and a kind of *awareness*, seem to exist in a kind of tension with each other.

If we are to try to reconcile these two senses of intellectual intuition for Fichte, we must of course find a way of seeing them as a *single* activity which captures both features, rather than as two distinct activities. One way to do this would be to understand the *philosopher’s* intellectual intuition as a special *instance* of the *very same type* of intellectual intuition that “would happen anyway”, one in which the activity which is usually only implicit is now performed in a way such that the philosopher is explicitly

aware of the activity itself.²⁵¹ This is indeed what Fichte seems to be suggesting at times.

This self-constructing I is none other than the philosopher's own I. He can intuit the indicated act of the I only within himself; and in order to be able to intuit this act, he must perform it. He freely chooses to produce this act within himself.²⁵²

There are two points here. The first is that in intellectually intuiting his own self-constructing I, the philosopher is performing *the very same* activity that everybody, including the philosopher himself in his non-philosophical moments, would be implicitly performing anyway, as the a priori condition of object-directed consciousness; but now, the philosopher is “freely choosing” to perform the type of act in question, the self-constructing act, in which the “mineness” of *the activity itself* becomes an item of explicit awareness: in which “the act of thinking and what is thought of in the act are one and the same”.²⁵³

There is a final potential difficulty with this view that I want to address. The philosopher is able to make the *implicit* act of self-constitution *explicit* by freely choosing to perform an activity which would happen anyway. Does this threaten to “drain” the *spontaneity* from the activity in its merely implicit form? In what sense is the philosopher's act of self-constitution in which the activity itself becomes an item of explicit awareness “freely chosen” in a way that the self-constitution of “ordinary consciousness” is not? This is where Fichte's *ad hominem* arguments regarding the dogmatist and the idealist can be instructive. There is nothing straightforwardly

²⁵¹ Neuhouser also makes the distinction between implicit and explicit self-awareness. But I take it I am making a different point here. For Neuhouser, *explicit* self-awareness refers rather to the empirical, **reflective** self-consciousness in which the subject becomes an object.

²⁵² IWL 43; SW I: 460.

²⁵³ IWL 45; SW I: 462.

incoherent in the notion that the implicitly self-constituting I in ordinary object-directed consciousness is spontaneous and free *without realizing it*. Fichte says that when I occupy the “standpoint of ordinary thinking”, “I *forget* about my own act of thinking” and thus about “my freedom of thinking”.²⁵⁴ This is Fichte’s diagnosis, as it were, of the dogmatist—namely that he is prone to or even defined by a kind of motivated forgetting of freedom—as well as the reason the “acceptance of [idealism] is something that depends on freedom”—namely *a free choice to recognize one’s own freedom*.

[T]he concepts with which the *Wissenschaftslehre* is concerned [e.g. intellectual intuition] are concepts that are actually operative in every rational being, where they operate with the necessity of reason... But to understand the necessity just asserted, to think, in turn, of this act of thinking: this is not something that occurs mechanically. In order for this to occur, we must, through freedom, elevate ourselves to an entirely different sphere, *a sphere to which we do not obtain immediate entry* simply by virtue of the fact that we exist.²⁵⁵

One *could* interpret this to mean that in the “actual operations” of rationality (theoretical activity, say), the implicit (spontaneous) activity is not yet really freedom. *Latent* freedom is not freedom. Indeed, Fichte at one point suggests as much. It is *not* that the dogmatist is free “without realizing it” or despite his denial of it, but rather the dogmatist’s refusal of intellectual intuition means that he is actually not free at all. “The *Wissenschaftslehre* does not address itself to readers of this sort, for *they are lacking* in absolutely spontaneous self-activity, i.e., that completely independent confidence in themselves [*der ganz unabhängige Glaube an sich selbst*] which this philosophy presupposes.”²⁵⁶ Again, it depends on what “absolute self-activity” means here. What could be lacking is just the “absoluteness” of their self-activity, but this is in itself telling.

²⁵⁴ IWL 78; SW I: 492.

²⁵⁵ IWL 91; SW I: 506.

²⁵⁶ IWL 52; SW I: 468.

In the “New Presentation”, Fichte’s claims regarding the self-sufficiency of the I are always attached to this fully “self-conscious” freedom which (only) the idealist philosopher is able attain, through the “special type of consciousness”²⁵⁷ associated with the *philosopher’s* intellectual intuition. Moreover, the self-sufficiency which Fichte describes here seems to go hand-in-hand with the stronger (indeed the strongest) claim of mind-dependence.

Anyone who is conscious of his own self-sufficiency and independence *from everything outside of himself*—a consciousness that can be obtained only by making something of oneself on one’s own and independently of everything else—will not require things in order to support his self, nor can he employ them for this purpose, for *they abolish his self-sufficiency and transform it into a mere illusion*.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ IWL 48; SW I: 465.

²⁵⁸ IWL 18-19; SW I: 433.

3) The Unity and Self-Sufficiency of Reason

We are trying to understand the meaning of Fichte's claim regarding the self-sufficiency of the I, and the extent to which it is connected to the basic metaphysical claim that subjectivity is *sui generis* because it, unlike things, is characterized by self-constituting activity. We need now to consider another issue which is closely connected to the question of self-sufficiency, namely the extent to which Fichte thinks the basic metaphysical claim, which he thinks directly follows from the "transcendental turn", is itself enough to demonstrate the "unity of reason".

It is clear from the "New Presentation" that Fichte's reading of Kantian transcendental idealism is fundamentally motivated by the desire to solve the problem of the unity of reason in a way which also demonstrates reason's "absolute" self-sufficiency. We have seen that Fichte characterizes the intellectual intuition particular to the philosopher as a *performance* which at once motivates and manifests a confidence, belief or faith [*Glaube*] in and a "full *feeling* [*Gefühl*]" of his "own freedom and self-sufficiency"²⁵⁹. But, Fichte says, this belief or feeling can only be fully validated [*bewähren*] by basing it or grounding it in "something higher".

The only way in which this can be accomplished is by exhibiting the ethical law within us...It is in *this* way that the I becomes characterized as something *absolutely* active. Our intuition of self-activity and freedom *has its foundation* in our consciousness of this law...It is only through the medium of the ethical law that I catch a glimpse of *myself*; and insofar as I view myself through this medium, I *necessarily* view myself as self-active.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ IWL 18; SW I: 433.

²⁶⁰ IWL 49; SW I: 466; emphases added.

We can say that for Fichte the *mere* belief, derived from theoretical considerations, in the I as self-active and self-constituting, is *confirmed*, or revealed to be *absolutely* necessary, only in the “consciousness of the moral law”. Intellectual intuition—immediate awareness of self-activity—is itself a consciousness of the moral law. As such, we can understand Fichte as saying that the motivating interest toward idealism as a theoretical, speculative standpoint is the feeling of freedom (and self-sufficiency!) which is validated as absolutely necessary in moral consciousness. Thus the latter itself creates a moral demand on the way theoretical activity is conceived. Fichte says “I *ought* to begin my thinking with the thought of the pure I, and I *ought* to think of this pure I as absolutely self-active—not as determined by things, but rather as determining them.”²⁶¹ The idealistic starting point is a “practical necessity”, i.e. a *moral* obligation. This thought explicates both the point behind Fichte’s *ad hominem* argumentation vis-à-vis dogmatism and idealism, as well as at least one sense in which Fichte adheres to the “primacy of the practical”. I will not be pursuing these particular thoughts further, but rather focusing on the relationship for Fichte between this thought and the “proof of the pudding” strategy, as I have called it, where the “proof of the pudding” is the demonstration of the unity of reason and thus, putatively, of reason’s self-sufficiency.

It is clear that, for Fichte, beginning with the absolute self-activity of the I immediately enables us to see reason in both its theoretical and practical employments as unified.

If philosophy begins with a fact [*Tatsache*], then it places itself in the midst of a world of being and finitude, and it will be difficult indeed for it to discover any path leading from this world to an infinite and supersensible one. If, however, philosophy begins with a *Tathandlung*, then it finds itself at the precise point

²⁶¹ IWL 50; SW I: 467.

where *these two worlds are connected* with each other and from which they can both be surveyed *with a single glance*.²⁶²

With this, transcendental idealism simultaneously reveals itself to be the only type of philosophical thinking that accords with duty. It is the mode of thinking in which *speculation* and *the ethical law* are most intimately united [*sich innigst vereinigen*].²⁶³

In my discussion of the problem of the unity of reason in Kant, I explicated the various ways in which Kant himself tried to affect the “transition” from the concept of nature to the concept of moral freedom. I distinguished between three senses of duality which Kant seemed intent on unifying, or at least showing the connection between—namely, (1) that between our conceptions of the natural and moral *worlds*, (2) that between our conceptions of ourselves as “member” of those worlds, i.e. as natural and moral beings, and (3) that between our cognitive and conative capacities, i.e. our senses of ourselves as knowers and doers. I suggested that Kant at various points in the *Critiques* offered different solutions to these worries—through reference to (i) the highest good, guaranteed by a highest reason, (ii) the doctrine of the double character of the I and of the primacy of the practical, and (iii) the idea of beauty as a symbol of morality. I argued that the issue of the *unity* of reason was indeed wrapped up with the question of the *self-sufficiency* of reason for Kant, and that we can summarize Kant’s point of view in the following way: reason in each of its particular employments, theoretical and practical, is *self-legitimizing* in the sense that it is capable of satisfying its particular demand, namely of providing a robust concept of nature and a self-motivating respect for the moral law, with resources internal to it; but *finite* reason *as a whole* or in a unified sense is not *self-sufficient*, because it requires reference to or dependence on something outside

²⁶² IWL 50; SW I: 467; emphasis added.

²⁶³ IWL 51; SW I: 468.

of finite reason and its resources to guarantee that all of its demands are simultaneously fulfilled or capable of fulfillment, i.e. the concept of divine or “highest” reason, as an intelligent, benevolent creator and ultimate guarantor of the highest good, which unites *all* the interests of finite reason. In particular I claimed that Kant never gives us a satisfying account of the unity underlying the last of the dualities I mentioned—the relationship between our cognitive and conative capacities—and thus a unified account of ourselves as both knowers and doers.

The relationship between Fichte’s reading of transcendental idealism and his intent to solve the problem of the unity of reason is perhaps most clearly evident in the opening lectures of the *Wissenschaftslehre* from 1804. There Fichte returns yet again to a painstaking discussion of the relationship between the *Wissenschaftslehre* and Kant’s philosophy as a whole, as he perceives it. In the opening lectures, Fichte makes the claim that the “essence of all philosophy” consists in the task to “trace all multiplicity...back to absolute oneness [or unity]”²⁶⁴. It is clear in this context that Fichte associates “oneness” or “unity” here with “the absolute”, so that “the task of philosophy could be expressed as the *presentation of the absolute*”²⁶⁵. He goes on to assert that the *Wissenschaftslehre* and Kantian philosophy belong to the same *genus*, which he calls “transcendentalism”. The distinguishing mark of transcendentalism is, Fichte says, a positing of the *absolute* as the unity of *being* and *thinking*.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ *Science of Knowing* [hereafter SK], 23; GA II, 8. “[D]as Wesen der Philosophie würde darin bestehen: Alles Mannigfaltige...rückzuführen auf absolute Einheit.”

²⁶⁵ SK, 24; GA II: 10. “[D]ie Aufgabe der Philosophie läßt sich auch ausdrücken: Darstellung des Absoluten.”

²⁶⁶ See, e.g. SK, 30; GA II, 24. “All transcendental philosophy, such as Kant’s (and in this respect the WL is not yet different from his philosophy), posits the absolute neither in being nor in consciousness but in the union of both...it follows, I say, that for this kind of philosophy the difference between *being* and *thinking*, as valid in itself, totally disappears”; or SK, 26; GA II, 15. “Like Kantian philosophy, the WL is

I hope that, in light of the foregoing discussion, such an assertion at least has some provisional coherence. This is yet another way of putting the point, first introduced in the Aenesidemus review, of the transcendental circle which is itself intended to be a direct consequence of the Copernican Revolution or transcendental turn. The very idea of self-constituting activity is meant to elucidate the sense, *in the case of subjectivity at least*, in which being and thinking are the same.²⁶⁷ After identifying the common genus of transcendentalism so understood, Fichte goes on to describe what demarcates the *Wissenschaftslehre* from Kant's version of transcendentalism. Firstly, he complains that Kant did not conceive of this absolute—identified here as the unity of being and thinking—in its “pure” or “absolute self-sufficiency”²⁶⁸. Rather, Kant at the same time considers this very unity to be the “basic common property or accident” of three separate “primordial modes [*Urmodifikationen*]”²⁶⁹, which he labels ‘x, y, and z’. Essentially, then, Fichte accuses Kant of being saddled with, or “trapped in” *three* absolutes, which Fichte associates with each of the three critiques. The problem, given Fichte's conception of the task of philosophy in general, is that Kant is never able to “trace” *this* multiplicity of absolutes “back to a unity”.

The three absolutes are identified by Fichte as: 1) x=sensible experience, 2) z=the moral world, 3) y=“the common but wholly inscrutable root” of—or alternatively, the

transcendental philosophy, and thus it resembles Kant's philosophy in that it does not posit the absolute in the thing, as previously, or in subjective knowing...but in the oneness of both.”

²⁶⁷ What makes this Parmenidean formula so alarming as a description of Kant's transcendental idealism, I want to maintain, is precisely the ambiguity involved in the transcendental circle's larger metaphysical commitments, i.e. how strong of a reading of mind-dependence is implied here.

²⁶⁸ See, eg., SK, 31, 34; GA II: 27, 36.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

“connection [*Zusammenhang*]” between—the first two.²⁷⁰ At this stage Fichte is ready to formulate the distinctive feature of the *Wissenschaftslehre* which demarcates it from Kantianism. The *Wissenschaftslehre* begins, Fichte says here, with the “insight into the immediate *inseparability* of these two modes of division”²⁷¹, that is, between the two-fold division into being and thinking, on the one hand, and the three-fold division into the sensible world, the moral world, and the connection between *them*, on the other. Additionally, Fichte asserts that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is able to comprehend the “total identity” between the absolutes which represent the unities behind these two modes of division, in “*one self-contained stroke*”.²⁷²

We can re-formulate Fichte’s complaint here in a way which leans on our prior discussion of Kant. The crucial issue here is of course Kant’s conception of “spontaneity”. We can read Fichte’s claim that Kant is saddled with three different “absolutes” as related to Kant’s refusal or inability (principled or otherwise) to identify or unify the three types of spontaneity that are necessarily at work in each of the critiques:

- 1) the spontaneity involved in the originary synthesis which produces the self-relatedness characteristic of the unity of apperception, associated with the theoretical use of reason and the ground of our concept of nature
- 2) the transcendental freedom required for the self-legislation of the (itself self-motivating) moral law, and as such for all dutiful and moral action, associated with the practical use of reason and thus the ground of the moral world
- 3) the “aesthetic freedom” in the spontaneous, purposive employment of our cognitive faculties in *aesthetic* judgment, which is responsible for grounding the “transition” from the concept of nature to the concept of freedom.

²⁷⁰ SK, 32; GA II: 31. Fichte’s phraseology here is intriguing, in that he takes over Kant’s way of describing the so-called “common root” between *sensibility* and *understanding*—the “*gemeinschaftliche, aber uns unbekannte Wurzel*” [Fichte refers here to the “*gemeinschaftliche, aber völlig unerforschliche Wurzel*”]—in describing what is clearly meant to refer to the unity of theoretical and practical reason, or the “world of sensible experience” and the “moral world”. Nor does Kant usually refer to the relation between the latter two with the term “*Zusammenhang*”, but rather by the term “*Übergang*”.

²⁷¹ SK, 33; GA II, 35.

²⁷² SK, 34; GA II, 36.

All three require an a priori spontaneous activity unconditioned by or prior to empirical conditions, and are in this sense “absolute”, but Kant does not unify them in a single unified account of spontaneous activity, or discuss their internal relationships. This can shed some light on Fichte’s description of the “absolute” in Kant’s case being considered a mere “common property or accident” of the three spheres. “Spontaneity”, here, is taken to be a shared *property* of the “ground” of each of the spheres. But if spontaneity is a *mere* shared property, there are two further issues that Kant leaves unresolved which Fichte wants to address. Firstly, what is the relationship between the “spontaneities” manifest or operable in each sphere? Assuming the language of “faculties”, we can still ask: is the “faculty of spontaneity” at play in the theoretical use of reason *the very same* faculty involved in the self-legislation of the moral law? The issue of the unity of reason touches on this question. Secondly, what is it about spontaneous activity essentially associated with subjectivity itself which makes it necessary that it manifest itself in precisely *these* ways, in these three “guises”? Fichte wants a conception of spontaneity from which the necessity of the division into these spheres is seen as itself necessary, that is, to *derive* the spheres from the initial conception. This evokes again the “proof of the pudding” strategy:

Its essence [the *Wissenschaftslehre*] consists first in discovering the root (indiscernible for Kant) in which the sensible and supersensible worlds *come together* [*zusammenhängen*] and then in providing *the actual conceptual derivation* [*Ableitung*] of both worlds from a single principle.²⁷³

It’s clear that in “tracing” this multiplicity among senses of spontaneity “back to a unity”, Fichte wants a unitary account of spontaneous activity itself which will elucidate the

²⁷³ SK, 32; GA II: 32; emphases added.

particular manifestations of spontaneity in each of these spheres. This is why these tasks are to be accomplished “in a single stroke”. From this perspective, it seems clear that Fichte is directly attempting to answer the Kantian problem of the unity of reason from the perspective of the *third* sense of duality I mentioned. That is, he wants to give us a single, unified account of subjectivity’s essential activity which simultaneously makes sense of both its theoretical and practical-moral activities. This task is summarized in the introduction to the *Sittenlehre*.

I posit myself as active...this means that I make a distinction within myself between an *ability to know* and a *real force* [*ein wissendes, und eine reelle Kraft*], which, as such, does not *know* but *is*; and yet I view the two as absolutely one. How do I make this distinction? How do I arrive at *precisely this determination* of what is being distinguished?²⁷⁴

Fichte then summarizes in very rough outline how the derivation of our cognitive and conative capacities from the singular self-positing of pure activity is supposed to work. He begins, presumably in addressing the first of the questions in the quote above, by appeal to the transcendental circle. This move is familiar from our discussion heretofore. Knowledge and being (the subjective and objective elements), he says, are “separated only *within* consciousness” and that there is “no being except by means of consciousness”.²⁷⁵ This separation within consciousness is required [*genöthigt*] “in order to be able to say to myself ‘I’”, that is, the separation is a necessary condition of the possibility of the kind of self-relation associated with the unity of apperception. Now, Fichte says, insofar as I consider the subjective side of this separation, I consider myself as a knower [*als bloß erkennendes...Subject*], which means that I am “entirely *dependent* on objectivity”, that is, on the representation of “some stuff that simply cannot be changed

²⁷⁴ *System of Ethics* (hereafter abbreviated SE), 10; SW IV: 4; emphases added, translation amended.

²⁷⁵ SE 11; SW IV: 5.

by my efficacy [*Wirksamkeit*]”. Objectivity from such a theoretical perspective is represented merely as a resistance [*Widerstand*] which is itself simply the result and product of the “laws of consciousness”. This Fichte conceives as a necessary feature of self-activity. “Wherever and whenever you see activity, you necessarily see resistance as well, for otherwise you see no activity.”²⁷⁶ So though theoretical activity is an activity, it is a determinate activity in which the activity (the subjective aspect) *appears* [*erscheint*] to be determined and entirely dependent on what is objective.

The principle of practical philosophy, by contrast, considers the activity as it is “*really* posited” and ascribed to the “unified and indivisible I”; that is, practical philosophy considers what is *objective* in the I itself, or as Fichte calls it, “real force”. Real force explains how “something objective can come from something subjective”, namely the determination of what is objective *from a concept*, i.e. the concept of an end, which is “not itself determined in turn by what is objective but is determined absolutely by itself”.²⁷⁷ We can see here another sense in which Fichte solves the problem of the unity of reason through a version of the “primacy of the practical”. Fichte’s talk here of practical activity as the determination of the objective through the concept of the self-determined end has clear Kantian resonances, particularly with Kant’s talk of “causality through freedom”.

[W]e start with activity...the most important result of all this is the following: there is an absolute independence and self-sufficiency of the mere concept (that which is ‘categorical’ in the so-called categorical imperative), due to a causality of what is subjective exercised upon what is objective—just as there is supposed to be an absolutely self-positing being (of the material stuff), due to a causality of

²⁷⁶ SE 12; SW IV: 7.

²⁷⁷ SE 15; SW IV: 10.

what is objective upon what is subjective. With this *we have joined together the two extremes of the entire world of reason.*²⁷⁸

What is of interest to me here is not how “successful” this alleged derivation of both the theoretical and practical uses of reason is, but rather what this particular strategy of solving the problem of the unity tells us about the meaning of the claim of self-sufficiency. We can say here that for Fichte both theoretical and practical activity taken singly—or from the ordinary standpoint of life—involves a certain kind of “illusion”, or what Fichte is comfortable here calling mere “appearances” [*Erscheinungen*]. In theoretical activity the thinking subject *appears* to be constrained by something “outside” activity; likewise, practical activity *appears* to be “an efficacy exercised *upon something outside me*”. But from the standpoint of speculation, we can say, this claim or assumption of “something outside” activity—either determining it or it itself being determined—must be seen as a “mere” appearance.

All the things included in this appearance—from, at the one extreme, the end that is posited absolutely by myself, to, at the other extreme, the raw stuff of the world—are mediating elements of the same, and are hence themselves only appearances [*nur Erscheinungen*].²⁷⁹

Fichte seems clearly committed here to a strong interpretation of the mind-dependence entailed by the transcendental circle here. That is to say, he thinks the circle commits us to the presupposition that nothing “outside” of activity can play any role whatsoever in the determination of that activity, and thus that that activity is *metaphysically* self-sufficient.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ SE 17; SW IV: 12.

Briefly stated, the result of this investigation is as follows: nothing is absolute but pure activity, and *all consciousness* and *all being* is *grounded* upon this pure activity...*nothing is purely true but my self-sufficiency.*²⁸⁰

That pure activity is metaphysically and essentially self-sufficient means that it is entirely *self-grounding*. It will help here to return to a comparison with Kant. I claimed that for Kant the experience of beauty—aesthetic judgment—can serve as a means of “connecting” the terms of the third duality, i.e. between our cognitive and conative capacities, by allowing an *analogy* between the supersensible ground of the unity of the *cognitive* faculties (now, in aesthetic judgment, in harmony with the supersensible ground of the *object* of natural beauty) with the supersensible ground of the *practical* faculty, i.e. of the subject as free from sensible conditions and thus morally self-legislative. We can say that for Kant, the analogy afforded by aesthetic experience allows us to see the “three spontaneities”, the supersensible grounds of the unities of our cognitive, aesthetic and conative faculties, as *in harmony* with each other, or in other words, it affords us a view on the *possible* identity between them. But for Kant this analogy itself does not afford us a positive proof of their identity or unity. This is why even though, taken individually, theoretical and practical reason are *self-legitimizing*, human reason as a whole is not *self-sufficient*. We can now put this a different way: human reason as a whole is not self-sufficient for Kant because it is not *self-grounding*, and this in *two ways*: (1) theoretical reason is, in itself, dependent on the noumenal ground of appearances, and (2) human reason as a whole is dependent on a divine or highest reason.

Fichte’s “proof of the pudding” strategy seems designed to demonstrate the “self-legitimizing” character of reason as a whole. One must begin by presupposing the

²⁸⁰ SE 17; SW IV: 12.

unitary absolute activity of the pure I, a presupposition which is validated through the demonstration that everything pertaining to the I, i.e. its cognitive and practical experience, can be derived from that presupposition. *If* such a derivation is successful, it proves that *both* theoretical and practical reason's demands, for a concept of nature on the one hand and a concept of an absolutely binding moral law on the other, are capable of simultaneous fulfillment *solely on the basis of resources internal to **human** reason itself*.

Seen in this way, the proof of reason's *self-legitimacy* stands or falls with the success of such a derivation itself. *This* project then is compatible with what I have called the weak interpretation of the transcendental circle which necessitates the presupposition which is to be validated through the (alleged) derivation. What I am suggesting is that Fichte's commitments are stronger here. Reason of course is equated with pure self-activity.

What then is the overall gist of the WL, summarized in a few words? It is this: reason is absolutely self-sufficient; it exists only for itself. But nothing exists for reason except reason itself. It follows that everything reason is must have its foundation [*muss...begründet seyn*] within reason itself and must be explicable solely on the basis of reason itself and not on the basis of anything outside reason, for reason could not get outside of itself without renouncing itself.²⁸¹

Reason is to be considered not only as self-legitimizing but *self-sufficient* in the sense of being self-grounding because, under the strong interpretation of the thesis of mind-dependence, there is nothing outside of reason for it to be grounded on. This strong metaphysical commitment is apparent if we interpret Fichte's slogan in the "New Presentation", "I am *only* active", to mean that the I as activity is not, *in any sense*, passive or dependent on anything outside of the activity itself. But as I have stressed, there is nothing in the idea of the transcendental circle itself which *necessitates* such a

²⁸¹ IWL 59; SW I: 474.

strong claim regarding mind-dependence. The claim that “I am only active” is not directly entailed by the claim that the I is “only for itself”. This is to say that the claim of the self-constitution of the I swings logically free from the claim of the self-sufficiency of the I. I have been suggesting that the circle reveals to us a basic asymmetry between the structure of subjectivity and the structure of “what is not subjectivity”. Within the circle, the I is “*only* for the I”, i.e. it is incoherent to conceive of an I that is not for itself. “To be for itself” is just what it is to be an I. The circle suggests the metaphysical uniqueness of subjectivity but itself says nothing regarding the metaphysical status of “non-subjectivity”.

As I will show in the next chapters, Heidegger in *Being and Time* gives an account of human subjectivity, *Dasein*, as an ontologically unique “mode of being” [*Seinsmodus*] which shares its essentials with this account. *Dasein* is the (unique) being [*Seiende*] for whom its own being [*Sein*] “is an issue”. I will argue that (i) the basic ontological structure of *Dasein* for Heidegger is “self-constituting”, (ii) that Heidegger’s account unifies the “theoretical” and “practical” aspects of this self-constituting activity, but (iii) rejects the Idealist residual metaphysical commitments regarding self-sufficiency.

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Part III: Heidegger's Theory of Selfhood

After publishing *Being and Time* in 1927, Heidegger began a sustained engagement with both Kant and the Idealists, particularly Fichte, which lasted for several years²⁸². In a footnote to the most famous result of this engagement, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*²⁸³, he announces that his interpretation of the metaphysical import of Kant's Copernican Revolution shares much in common with the Idealists, but that it "moves in the opposite direction" from German Idealism²⁸⁴. In previous chapters, I have attempted to elucidate the potential fault-lines in Kant's conception of subjectivity which Fichte was interested in healing. I showed how Fichte interpreted the metaphysical import of Kant's transcendental philosophy by developing a metaphysics of subjectivity which understood subjectivity as a *sui generis* ontological characteristic of human being, and that the fundamental feature of this unique ontological status was *self-constitution*. Furthermore, I explored Fichte's attempt to exploit this feature in articulating the unitary structure of reason as *self-sufficient*.

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how Heidegger's early "fundamental ontology"—or, as he glosses it, the "ontological analytic of the finite essence of human beings"²⁸⁵—fits into this transcendental conception of subjectivity which begins with

²⁸² At the end of PIK, Heidegger writes that after studying Kant's first *Critique* anew, "the scales fell from my eyes and it became an essential confirmation of the correctness of the path on which I searched". In a letter to Jaspers on June 25th, 1929, Heidegger reports that he is lecturing on Fichte, Schelling and Hegel for the first time, and that "once again it opens a world for me". He goes on to say that it confirms the "old experience" that someone else cannot read for you, implying that before the lectures, his opinions about German Idealism were at best second-hand. *Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel 1920-1963*; ed. by Biemel and Saner, Klostermann 1990.

²⁸³ Hereafter referred to, as is common, the "Kantbook".

²⁸⁴ KPM 137; fn. 196.

²⁸⁵ KPM 1.

Kant and continues with Fichte, both in the sense in which he is continuing in that tradition and the sense in which he is taking it in the “opposite direction” from the one Fichte took. As is well-known, the centerpiece of Heidegger’s Kantbook is his identification of the “common root” between sensibility and understanding as the transcendental power of imagination, and his interpretation of this latter faculty as the essence of human transcendence. After analyzing Heidegger’s attempt to elucidate the transcendental power of imagination as the common root and as the essence of transcendence in the Kantbook (§ 1), I turn to considering how we are to understand the specifics of Heidegger’s appropriation of Kantian philosophy in relation to the fuller statement of his own fundamental ontology laid out in *Being and Time*. I give a reading of the key concept of *Verstehen* in the latter text which shows its affinities with the Kantian faculty of imagination as Heidegger understands it (§2). I then consider the extent to which, given Heidegger’s emendations to this idealistic conception of subjectivity, his conception of selfhood addresses the abiding Idealist concerns with a unitary conception of the human being as a whole and the concomitant issue of self-sufficiency (§3).

1) Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant as a Fundamental Ontologist

Heidegger's attitude towards Kant throughout his early works is, in point of fact, ambivalent. Indeed, in the only sustained, direct discussion of Kant in *Being and Time*, in the section on "Care and Selfhood", while speaking approvingly of the Kantian 'I think' as a "genuine phenomenal starting-point", Heidegger at the same time insists that Kant has "by no means achieved an *ontological* interpretation of Selfhood"²⁸⁶. His complaint is that Kant misconstrues the ontological status of *Dasein*, or the human being, which alone is capable of expressing itself through saying 'I think'.

Kant's analysis has two positive aspects. For one thing, he sees the impossibility of ontically reducing the "I" to a substance; for another thing, he holds fast to the "I" as an 'I think'. Nevertheless, he takes this "I" as subject again, and he does so in a sense which is ontologically inappropriate. For the ontological concept of the subject characterizes *not the selfhood of the "I" qua self, but the selfsameness and steadiness* [die Selbigkeit und Beständigkeit] *of something that is always present-at-hand*.²⁸⁷

In short, according to Heidegger, Kant has not rid himself of the Cartesian habit of construing the I as a *res cogitans*, that is, as a (distinct and particular) kind of *thing*, indeed, as something "present-to-hand". This assessment of Kant is often repeated elsewhere during this period whenever Heidegger makes reference to Kant, in particular in *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*²⁸⁸.

The Kantbook is unique in its attribution to Kant of a "genuine insight"—meaning, one that prefigures his own—into the "ontological constitution of the subjectivity of the finite subject", that is, an appropriate metaphysical characterization of the "selfhood of

²⁸⁶ SZ 318.

²⁸⁷ SZ 319-320.

²⁸⁸ See also PIK.

the I qua self” that in *Being and Time* he had insisted that Kant had fallen short of. There are two peculiarities we can note here in passing. The first is Heidegger’s admission on the one hand that Kant understands that the I cannot be “reduced” to a substance, but his insistence on the other that Kant continues to conceive of the I as something *vorhanden*. The other peculiarity is Heidegger’s seemingly anomalous approval, in the Kantbook, of Kant’s achievements. Kant is usually described as precisely stuck with the main shortcoming of modern philosophy in general, from Descartes to Hegel (and indeed beyond to Nietzsche), of conceiving of all beings, including those characterized by subjectivity, as something *vorhanden*, that is, as belonging to the flawed traditional ontology which he will later identify as the “metaphysics of presence”. It is only in the Kantbook that Heidegger describes Kant as a forerunner in his own attempt to “inquire beforehand into the possibility of a suitable interpretation of the subject...that is free from the entire tradition”²⁸⁹.

I don’t want to dwell too much on the first peculiarity at this preliminary stage of the discussion. We can note however that what Heidegger says is that Kant merely avoids “*ontically*” reducing the I to a substance.²⁹⁰ The Paralogisms make this avoidance evident in their criticism of rational psychology’s attempt to “read off” the substantiality of the I from the “sole text” of the ‘I think’.²⁹¹ But he might mean then that what Kant does *not* thereby avoid is *ontologically* reducing the I to a substance. Heidegger thinks, or must think, that Kant nevertheless “takes the I *as subject* again” insofar as he insists on

²⁸⁹ GP 207.

²⁹⁰ Heidegger’s distinction between the ontic and the ontological will come under discussion later; but provisionally, the ontic refers to the concrete and particular metaphysical features of things, while the ontological refers more to general metaphysical structures, and is thus always associated with an “*understanding of being*”.

²⁹¹ KRV A343/B401.

a “supporting ground” for this ‘I think’ in the *noumenal self*, and he makes it clear in a footnote that he understands the traditional ontological categories “subject” and “substance” as just such a “supporting ground”, which thus provides its “selfsameness and steadiness”.²⁹² Our prior discussion of the ambiguity regarding the exact mistake of the Paralogisms can be helpful here²⁹³. If Kant is asserting there merely that the Paralogisms go wrong in attributing qualities to the noumenal self which can only be properly attributed to the self as it is in appearance, rather than the mistake lying in conceiving of the self as a *thing* at all—even a “thing in itself”—Kant, by Heidegger’s lights, is falling prey to the “traditional” mistake of seeing the self ultimately as a certain kind of *thing*—something to which we should understand ontologically as *vorhanden*.

Likewise, in the passage from *Being and Time* above, Heidegger credits Kant with the recognition that the I must always be understood as an “I think”, that is, as an activity of a certain sort, but seems to think that Kant fails to grasp the essential *intentionality* of subjectivity.

Kant has indeed avoided cutting the “I” adrift from thinking; but he has done so without starting with the ‘I think’ itself in its full essential content as an ‘I think something’, and above all, without seeing what is ontologically ‘presupposed’ in taking the ‘I think something’ as a basic characteristic of the self.²⁹⁴

This might seem an odd indictment of Kant, for whom, after all, the conditions of the possibility of experience are *inseparable* from the conditions of the possibility of the *objects* of experience. It becomes clear in this context, however, that Heidegger is

²⁹² SZ 317. “Das »Ich« und das »Selbst« wurden von jeher in der »Ontologie« dieses Seienden als der tragende Grund (Substanz bzw. Subjekt) begriffen.”

²⁹³ See part I, § 2c.

²⁹⁴ SZ 321.

accusing Kant of missing the full phenomenon of Dasein as “being-in-the-world”²⁹⁵. But as we will see, the Kantbook rather credits Kant with precisely elucidating the structure of *transcendence*, which Heidegger elsewhere identifies with being-in-the-world. Here, Heidegger’s ferocious anti-Cartesianism—along with, perhaps, an overconfident trust in the novelty of his thinking—seems to be getting in the way of a more sympathetic view of Kant.²⁹⁶

Why then Heidegger’s apparent “change of heart” in the Kantbook?—a change of heart, too, regarding his dismissive attitude about the very concepts of the subject and subjectivity? It should be remarked that the Kantbook after all is a working up of material that Heidegger had prepared for the Davos disputation with Cassirer. It’s not implausible that there is an element of academic jockeying and one-upmanship in Heidegger’s appropriation of Kant as an ally at precisely this point in time. His infamous remark that the first *Critique* has “nothing whatsoever to do with the theory of knowledge”²⁹⁷ is best seen as a hyperbolic polemical jab at the then-dominant neo-Kantians. But this surely does not explain things entirely on its own. Indeed, we can see Heidegger’s wavering as precisely mirroring the precariousness of Kant’s theory of subjectivity which I had been at pains to point out earlier. Kant, I argued, had not been particularly sensitive to the metaphysical import of his own Copernican Revolution when it came to subjectivity, nor did providing such a unified metaphysics of subjectivity as

²⁹⁵ “If by this “something” we understand an entity *within-the-world*, then it tacitly implies that the *world* has been presupposed; and this very phenomenon of the world co-determines the state of being of the “I”...*In saying “I”, Dasein expresses itself as being-in-the-world.*”

²⁹⁶ As mentioned in the introduction, it is perhaps this abiding anti-Cartesianism that might explain, in terms of the interpretative side of things, the lack of attention to the theory of subjectivity in Heidegger and thus the *relative* neglect of KPM.

²⁹⁷ This is almost a refrain of Heidegger’s in his various interpretive works on the first *Critique*, but see esp. KPM 16-17: “Die [KRV] hat mit “Erkenntnistheorie” nichts zu schaffen.”

spontaneous self-activity ever become a direct concern of his. Heidegger in his direct dealings with Kant after *Being and Time* tends to describe Kant as opening a way out of the confines of “the tradition” while himself remaining ultimately on just this side of it.²⁹⁸ We have seen that in *Being and Time* in particular he focuses on the ways in which Kant remains mired in the tradition, but it is my contention that the Kantbook is the result of a genuine insight into the “revolutionary” aspects of Kant’s philosophy, the very ones which had animated Fichte and the early Idealists. It is this insight which caused the “scales to fall from his eyes”, as he says, and convinced him that he had taken the “correct path” with his fundamental ontology²⁹⁹. In the remainder of this section I will focus on the positive elements of Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant which demonstrate its affinity with the Idealist tradition.

a) Ontological Asymmetry and Transcendence

As with Fichte’s understanding of idealism, it is a *sine qua non* feature of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology that the human being—Dasein—has a sui generis ontological status. This is clear from the very opening lines of the *Daseinsanalytik* of *Being and Time*³⁰⁰. Dasein’s “mode of being” [*Seinsart*] is to be “essentially” distinguished from

²⁹⁸ This suggests the image of Kant as a kind of Moses figure who leads the way to the promised land but does not himself enter it. Heidegger in the Kantbook, e.g., famously suggests that Kant remains mired in the tradition because he “shrank back” from certain crucial insights offered by his own revolutionary philosophy.

²⁹⁹ PIK 431.

³⁰⁰ See SZ §9.

Vorhandensein.³⁰¹ Heidegger is equally clear that Dasein can never possess the kind of being which belongs to “equipment” [*Zuhandenheit*]. Heidegger says that *Zuhandenheit*, *Vorhandenheit*, and the “*Weltlichkeit von Welt*” “must be kept in principle distinct”, and that

This third kind of being gives us an existential way of determining the nature of being-in-the-world, that is, of Dasein. The other two concepts of being are categories, and pertain to entities whose being is not of the kind which Dasein possesses.³⁰²

Since the former two correspond in a naïve way to “things of nature and things ‘invested with value’ [*Naturdinge und ‘wertbehaftete’ Dinge*]”,³⁰³ Heidegger is adopting the point essential to the Idealist tradition as we have been discussing it that subjectivity is metaphysically *sui generis* and never to be construed as a kind of *thing*. We can call this Heidegger’s fundamental doctrine of the “ontological asymmetry” between entities that are Dasein (human beings)³⁰⁴ and all other entities. This doctrine is intimately related to the more famous doctrine of the “ontological difference”, implicit throughout *Being and Time* and explicitly thematized soon thereafter in the aforementioned lecture course from 1927, the *Grundprobleme*.

The “ontological difference” asserts that there is a fundamental distinction between being and entities [*das Sein und das Seiende*]. Heidegger evokes this distinction in the

³⁰¹ SZ 42: “Dasein ist daher nie ontologisch zu fassen als Fall und Exemplar einer Gattung von Seiendem als Vorhandenem.”

³⁰² SZ 88.

³⁰³ SZ 63; though to describe them as such (i.e. “naïvely”) is to neglect their “worldly” character.

³⁰⁴ For the most part, I will adopt the usage of Dasein as just a name for concrete human entities [*Menschen*], following Carman’s persuasive discussion in *Heidegger’s Analytic*, though unlike Carman I do not think the term is completely unambiguous in Heidegger’s usage. For example, in KPM in particular Heidegger often uses the phrase, “the Dasein in human beings [*Dasein im Menschen*]”. For the most part ‘Dasein’ refers to concrete individuals, though sometimes to something more like the (*sui generis*) *mode of being* of human beings, to which Heidegger usually refers with the technical term *Existenz*. I think this usage mirrors then the relationship between “subjectivity” and “human being” discussed in the introduction.

service of his central point that “being is not itself an entity”, which is itself crucial for the very formulation of his guiding question of the “*Seinsfrage*”, or question about the meaning of being (in general). The *Seinsfrage* asks about the meaning of being, over and above beings, and is what distinguishes his conception of philosophy as “ontology”, separated in principle then from the “ontic sciences”. The concomitant principle of “ontological asymmetry”—that “Dasein itself has a special distinctiveness as compared with other entities”³⁰⁵—necessitates that ontology first take the shape of a “fundamental ontology”, or an “ontological analytic of Dasein in general”³⁰⁶. Because Dasein’s special distinctiveness lies in “the fact that, in its very being, that being is an *issue* for it”—a feature that Heidegger denotes through the term “existence” [“*Existenz*”], which is then “allotted solely to Dasein”—fundamental ontology “must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*”.

The doctrine of ontological asymmetry then is as important as the ontological difference in understanding the most basic motivations and direction of Heidegger’s early thought. It is the fact that Dasein alone has a relationship not just to beings but to being—that is, the only entity for whom the distinction matters at all, for whom being, not least its own, “is an issue”—that necessitates that philosophy take the form of a fundamental ontology and thus a metaphysics of Dasein, an ontology whose goal is the articulation of the structure of Dasein’s *sui generis* “way of being”. Heidegger’s primary way of formulating the peculiarity is to say that Dasein alone and essentially “has an understanding of being” and “discloses being”. The goal of fundamental ontology is to make explicit what that understanding and that disclosure consists in.

³⁰⁵ SZ 11-12.

³⁰⁶ SZ 14.

The relationship between these two doctrines can begin to illuminate how Heidegger came to see Kant's transcendental philosophy as a precursor to this way of thinking. The ontological difference means that being is different from beings, it is "something" "over and above beings"—in other words, being "transcends" beings. "Being is the *transcendens* pure and simple."³⁰⁷ In having an understanding of being, over and above entities, Dasein is transcending entities. "Every disclosure of being as the *transcendens* is *transcendental* knowledge."³⁰⁸

Thought of in this way, Heidegger conceives of fundamental ontology from the beginning as "transcendental philosophy".

With this distinction between being and beings and the selection of being as theme we depart in principle from the domain of beings. We surmount it, transcend it. We can also call the science of being, as critical science, transcendental science.³⁰⁹

In this, and other passages, Heidegger seems to use the term "transcendental" merely as the adjectival form of "transcendence", and is thus comfortable describing fundamental ontology as transcendental philosophy just because it deals with the "problem of transcendence", namely how Dasein goes beyond beings in having an understanding of being itself, both its own and that of other beings. This is of course in itself not a very convincing justification from a Kantian point of view. What does this usage have to do with Kant's sense of the transcendental?

The first thing that needs to be noted in ameliorating the jarring effect of Heidegger's usage of the term, and its initial un-Kantian flavor, is that the "transcendent" which is being "surpassed toward", and thus the "object" of ontological knowledge thereby

³⁰⁷ SZ 38; italics removed.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ GP 23.

sought, is of course not any kind of transcendent *entity*, or thing in itself. It is “being”, or the *constitution of the being* of entities, both of Dasein and of other kinds of entities—which is, according to the ontological difference, never itself an entity. Further, Kant characterizes what he means by “transcendental” in a number of ways, but paradigmatically, and in line with the Copernican Revolution which announces the shift to transcendental philosophy, he says “I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*”³¹⁰. Heidegger’s gloss on this passage is instructive.

Hence, transcendental knowledge does not investigate the entity [*das Seiende*] itself, but rather the possibility of the preliminary understanding of being, i.e., at one and the same time: the constitution of the being of the entity.³¹¹

What Heidegger means exactly by “being” and by the “constitution of being [*Seinsverfassung*]” is not easy to straightforwardly state, and articulating it will be a task of what follows.³¹² But here we have a preliminary answer, taking Heidegger’s identification with Kant as a clue. To have an understanding of the *being* of entities—ontological knowledge—beyond ontic knowledge of entities—is to understand the conditions of the possibility of there *being* entities for Dasein. This matches quite closely in fact Kant’s sense of the goal of transcendental philosophy as synthetic *a priori* knowledge of the conditions of the possibility of objects of “experience”. For Kant, what we know when we have knowledge of these conditions is what it is for something to

³¹⁰ KRV A11/B25. Though of course Kant’s own usage of the term ‘transcendental’ is not exactly univocal; in particular, he also often refers in discussing the “logic of illusion” to the “transcendental use of the categories”, where it now looks like an adjectival form of the “transcendent” where the latter refers to noumena.

³¹¹ KPM 16.

³¹² In *Heidegger’s Analytic*, Carman glosses Heidegger’s concept of *Sein* as “what it is for entities to be understood as entities”. This fits well with Heidegger’s description of it as “that *on the basis of which* entities are entities”.

be an object of experience, and thus the kind of thing about which we can make objectively valid judgments. In this sense, Kant's question "how are synthetic a priori judgments possible" is directly translatable into Heidegger's question about "the inner possibility of ontology", and this is why Heidegger identifies Kant's critical philosophy as an ontology.

Accordingly, the legitimate interpretation of the sense of the "Copernican Revolution" is renewed. Hence, with this revolution Kant forces the problem of ontology to center stage...the ground-laying must pursue the a priori synthesis exclusively in itself, pursue it to the seed which provides its ground and which allows that synthesis to develop into what it is (allows it to be possible in its essence).³¹³

b) "Ontological Synthesis", Schematism, and the "Common Root"

In the earlier chapters on Kant, I urged a metaphysical reading of the originary synthetic activity upon which Kant's conception of theoretical subjectivity depends. In his interpretation of Kant, Heidegger similarly focuses on this synthetic activity, which he calls the "ontological synthesis". The ontological synthesis is understood as the condition of the possibility of ontological knowledge, that is, that which gives rise to an understanding of the *being* of entities, which is a sui generis characteristic of human subjectivity. In this section I will explicate and argue for the cogency of Heidegger's interpretation of ontological synthesis as rooted in the transcendental power of imagination. I evaluate Heidegger's claim relative to the criterion established in the chapter on Kant in response to Henrich's (unsuccessful, or so I argued) challenge that the common root is in principle impossible from within a genuinely Kantian framework.

³¹³ KPM 17-18.

This criterion insists that any successful identification of the common root must itself render intelligible the faculties or capacities it is supposed to ground, in this case, the capacities for sensibility and understanding. In the following section I will then initially compare Heidegger's account of the "unity of subjectivity" grounded in the transcendental power of imagination with Fichte's account of "intellectual intuition".³¹⁴

For Kant, in the Transcendental Deduction, as we have seen, spontaneous, pure, a priori synthesis (the transcendental unity of apperception) is the highest condition of the possibility of the objectivity of objects, and thus, of the possibility of objectively valid judgments. For Heidegger, this synthesis, or better, this synthetic activity, is "ontological" because it first makes possible knowledge of the being of entities, and thus reveals the *constitution* of the being [*Seinsverfassung*] of entities. Heidegger then understands Kant's project in the Transcendental Analytic of the first *Critique* in the following way:

So the question concerning the possibility of a priori synthesis narrows down to this: how can a finite being [*ein endliches Wesen*], which as such is delivered over to entities and is directed to acquiescence in these same entities, know [*erkennen*], i.e. intuit, entities, prior to all (actual instances of such) acquiescence, without indeed being their "creator" [*"Schöpfer"*]? In other words, *how must this finite being be with respect to the constitution of its own being*, so that such a bringing-forward of the constitution of the being of entities which is free from experience, i.e. ontological synthesis, is possible?³¹⁵

The meaning of Heidegger's "metaphysical reading" of the first *Critique*, as it is often called—and thus his understanding of the ontological import of the Copernican

³¹⁴ It is because Henrich sees the only possibility of the common root to consist in the kind of intellectual intuition that Kant vehemently denies that he declares the common root to be impossible "from within a Kantian framework". Though I pointed out earlier that Fichte's sense of intellectual intuition doesn't obviously fall foul of this restriction, it is true, it seems to me, that the latter does move into un-Kantian territory that Heidegger will avoid, precisely because of the fact that transcendental imagination remains essentially "acquiescent".

³¹⁵ KPM 38-39; italics mine, translation amended.

Revolution—is evident in this passage. Investigating the conditions of the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge of objects—of a priori synthetic judgments—demands, or amounts to, an investigation into the *constitution of the being* of the single kind of entity (human being, Dasein) which is capable of such knowledge, such that this (kind of) knowledge is *made intelligible* as belonging to the essence of that entity. This is why Heidegger describes the first *Critique* as not “essentially” a “theory of knowledge”, but rather as a metaphysics of Dasein, or in my parlance, a “theory of subjectivity”.³¹⁶

Because what is distinctive about this entity is that it is “transcending”, that is, transcends entities in having an understanding of the constitution of their being, the

problem of the possibility of ontology is accordingly the question of the essence and essential ground of the transcendence of the preliminary understanding of being. The problem of the transcendental, i.e. of *the synthesis which forms transcendence*, thus can be put in this way: *how must the finite entity that we call human being be* with respect to its innermost essence so that in general it can be open to an entity that it itself is not and that therefore must be able to show itself from itself.³¹⁷

As is clear from these passages, Heidegger’s understanding of the Kantian problematic emphasizes from the beginning that that entity whose being is under investigation, Dasein, is *finite*.³¹⁸ What does Heidegger mean by finitude here? It is interesting to note that Heidegger does not have in mind *initially* the sort of *temporal* finitude that is the

³¹⁶ Heidegger does not always resort to the hyperbolic claim that KRV has “nothing to do” with a theory of knowledge. The proper point is that the theory of knowledge in KRV, based on the very nature of its way of proceeding, i.e. inspired by the Copernican Revolution, amounts to or requires positive metaphysical claims about “subjectivity” (“the mode of cognition”).

³¹⁷ KPM 42-43. italics mine.

³¹⁸ That is why Heidegger describes Kant’s project repeatedly throughout KPM, understood as essentially the same as fundamental ontology, as the articulation of the “ontological constitution of the subjectivity of the finite subject in its finitude”.

focus of *Being and Time*.³¹⁹ Rather, the talk of “finite subjectivity” here refers primarily to the fact that knowledge is fundamentally dependent on beings that “exist in their own right” independently of being known. Heidegger takes his cue here from Kant’s discussion of intuition and the distinction between *intuitus derivativus* and *intuitus originarius*, which Kant of course equates with our familiar “intellectual intuition”. To say that Dasein is a “finite being” is to say that it exists “in the midst of beings that already are”³²⁰. Intuition is of course one of the fundamental sources or stems of human cognition or knowledge, and is the way in which knowledge is an “immediate” relation to an object that “exists anyway” alongside Dasein. Human intuition (as an *intuitus derivatus*) is a capacity for the *receptivity* of objects, that is, it depends on independently existing objects to be “given” to it, or to “affect” it.

Heidegger captures the finitude of human intuition by calling it “acquiescent” (*hinnehmend*).³²¹ Of course, the assumption of an acquiescent stance or relationship to an immediately given object depends on there being an object to acquiesce to.

Finite intuition, however, cannot acquiesce without the entity to be acquiesced to announcing itself. According to its essence, finite intuition must be approached or affected by what is intuitable in it.”³²²

What is being acquiesced *to*, or acknowledged, in finite intuition (and thus human knowledge in general) is the entity itself *in its being*, i.e. both *that* it is and *what* it is.

³¹⁹ Though of course these types of finitude are intimately related. Because Dasein is “ontologically” finite, dependent on other entities and thus “acquiescent”, it is temporally finite because the pure form of acquiescent intuition is time.

³²⁰ KPM 26.

³²¹ This is my translation of “*hinnehmend*”. Churchill’s “receptive” is insufficient because Heidegger also uses *Rezeptivität*. Taft’s “taking-in-stride” is better, and has the virtue of displaying the root sense of *hinnehmend* as a “taking-in” but to my mind evokes a sense of “aloofness”, of being “unaffected”, that is inappropriate here. While *hinnehmen* can mean “putting up with something”, this doesn’t seem to make much sense here. “Acquiesce” captures more the positive sense of a willful consent or agreement; it is a commitment to making oneself beholden to the being itself.

³²² KPM 26.

Being acquiescent to the being of the entity is a precondition of that entity becoming an “object [*Gegenstand*]” at all for subjectivity, that is, something that “stands-against” subjectivity in its own independent that-being and what-being [*Daß-sein und Was-sein*]. Finite intuition, as essentially acquiescent, is to be contrasted with an “infinite” or “absolute” intuition—*intuitus originarius*. “Infinite knowing is an intuition which as such allows the entity itself to be generated or originated [*entstehen läßt*].”³²³

The distinction, between finite intuition (and thus human knowledge) and infinite or divine knowledge, Heidegger says, “can only be made intelligible...by explicitly basing it on the problematic of the finitude of the human being.”³²⁴ How then to understand exactly what this “problematic” is? The “problem of transcendence” is: that while our “finite knowledge is noncreative [*nichtschöpferisch*] intuition”, we nevertheless have knowledge of an entity that is “outside of us, insofar as we are ourselves not this entity, and yet we have a *means of access* to it”.³²⁵ So the question is: ‘how can this finite being, which did not create the object and is essentially dependent on and acquiescent or beholden to the object, know anything about the object *prior to actual acquiescence* (i.e. a priori)?’ This is the same as Kant’s question: ‘how can we know anything about objects prior to experience when all empirical knowledge relies on sensation’?

Kant’s answer consists in showing how I can know a priori, ‘free from experience’, what it means or what it is for anything to be an object, that is, a possible object of experience, at all. Heidegger takes this task to be showing how it is that I can have *an*

³²³ KPM 30. We will return to this theme later; in particular to what is implied hereby regarding the “transcendental circle” we encountered in Fichte and the latter’s claim that the thing-in-itself is a “non-thought”.

³²⁴ KPM 34-35.

³²⁵ KPM 34; italics mine.

understanding of being (even a preliminary or tacit one), i.e. of what it means for something *to be*, at all. Spelling out such conditions of the possibility of a preliminary understanding of being is to spell out what *my being is* such that I can have such an understanding of the being of entities prior to any concrete encounter with entities. So this then is the special problem of *human* (i.e. finite) transcendence. For a “creative intuition”, there is no problem, for the latter can have an understanding of the being of entities simply because it gave those entities their being. They owe their being *to it*. But as a finite being, I am “delivered over”, i.e. already in the midsts of beings that are not me (that is, do not have my mode of being) and whose being I therefore did not create.

We can give Heidegger’s answer in a nutshell: it must “belong to my being” that in knowing entities I create not the entities themselves but rather the *horizon* within which entities can be encountered and show themselves *as* the entities they are. Though Dasein is not “ontically creative”, we can say that it is “ontologically creative”, that is, Dasein’s essential and distinctive *activity* must lie in creating or forming a priori the “pure look” of entities as entities.³²⁶ Dasein, in being “ontologically creative”, is creating neither entities nor the being of entities but rather the horizon of Dasein’s *access* to the being of entities, namely, as *objects*.

In order to be able to encounter an entity as the entity it is, it must already be “recognized” generally and in advance as an entity, i.e. with respect to the constitution of its being. But this implies that ontological knowledge (which is here always pre-ontological)³²⁷ is the condition for the possibility that in general something like an entity can itself stand-in-opposition [*entgegenstehen kann*] to a finite being. Finite beings must have this basic capacity to turn-toward while

³²⁶ The meaning of Heidegger’s talk of “looks” will be discussed in what follows.

³²⁷ Pre-ontological [*vorontologisch*] knowledge does not mean a state of knowledge that one has *before* a proper ontological knowledge, but rather something more like a “first” or preliminary or provisional ontological knowledge. Pre-ontological knowledge is then already (a kind of) ontological knowledge.

letting-stand-in-opposition [*dieses Grundvermögen einer entgegenstehenlassenden Zuwendung-zu...*].³²⁸

This “basic capacity” is, in simpler terms, an ability to attend to something which lets it become an object for me. That an entity “stands-in-opposition” [*gegenstehen*] here—that it “opposes me”—just means that it is an object [*Gegenstand*] for me, which in turn means therefore that it is not me, that its being is not my being, that it is what *it* is “as opposed” to being *me*, and finally, that it “exists in its own right”. As we will see, for Heidegger this basic faculty is the transcendental power of imagination. “In this original turning-toward, the finite being first allows a play-space [*Spielraum*] within which something can ‘correspond’ to it. To hold oneself in advance in such a play-space, to form it originally, is none other than the transcendence which marks all finite comportment to beings.”³²⁹ The transcendental power of imagination is understood by Heidegger as the power to *form* transcendence, and thus the power to have an understanding of being, which is metaphysically distinctive of human beings. Moreover, this capacity just is the activity of originary synthesis, or for Heidegger, the “ontological synthesis”.³³⁰

But we need to take a step back at this point. Kant’s goal is to show the conditions of the possibility of anything becoming an object of experience and thus of objectively valid judgments, that is, the conditions of the possibility of objectivity as such. Heidegger, as I hope to have made apparent, remains faithful to this Kantian project in searching for the conditions of the possibility of “having an understanding of being”. This understanding

³²⁸ KPM 70-71.

³²⁹ KPM 71.

³³⁰ Heidegger describes the “ontological synthesis” as the “synthesis which forms transcendence”; see KPM 61ff.

of being must be a self-directed attending to or a comporting oneself to entities which lets them show, “from out of themselves”, that and what they are. This is Heidegger’s interpretation of the “basic intention or purpose [*Grundabsicht*]”, as he says, of the transcendental deduction. Now, surprisingly perhaps, for Heidegger this intention or purpose is not fulfilled by the transcendental deduction itself, but rather by the transcendental schematism, which he says “must constitute the central core of the whole voluminous work”.³³¹ In order to evaluate this claim, we need to explicate Heidegger’s interpretation of this section, which he says actually “grounds” the transcendental deduction and is the “original sphere of the radical grounding of the possibility of ontological knowledge”.³³²

We can give some plausibility to Heidegger’s claim with the following remarks. In Kant’s words the goal of the transcendental deduction is an “explanation of *the way in which concepts can relate to objects a priori*”.³³³ But how this is so is still a genuine question even after the deduction, since after all, as Kant points out, the pure concepts of the understanding—under which the unified manifold of all given intuition “must stand”³³⁴, as the deduction itself had shown—are “entirely unhomogeneous” with all empirical intuitions. It is the task of the schematism rather to “show the possibility of applying pure concepts of the understanding to appearances in general”; and Kant’s conclusion in that section is after all that “the schemata of the concepts of pure understanding are *the true and sole conditions for providing them with a relation to*

³³¹ KPM 89.

³³² PIK 431.

³³³ KRV A85/B117.

³³⁴ KRV B143.

objects".³³⁵ But the "schema is in itself always only a product of the imagination"³³⁶, and the schema of the pure concepts of understanding is accomplished through the transcendental synthesis of the imagination. If the goal of the deduction was to show how the unity of "pure thinking" with "pure intuition" is possible, then the "ontological synthesis" is accomplished through the "schematizing" synthetic activity of the pure, productive faculty of transcendental imagination.

We have pointed out how, for Heidegger, ontological synthetic activity amounted to the a priori "forming of transcendence", that is, a forming of the horizon within which entities, from "out of themselves", could be encountered as the entities they are, i.e. as objects. In being a self-directed attending to entities which lets them stand-against, that is, lets them *be objects* for me, the ontological synthesis is a forming of the *horizon of objectivity*. If the ontological synthesis is the work of the productive imagination—which is also a "faculty of sensibility"—then that work can be described as the "*making-sensible* [*Versinnlichung*]" of the horizon. Pure productive imagination, in making pure concepts sensible, is creating what Kant says are "mediating representations" between pure concepts and pure intuitions, the transcendental schemata.³³⁷ These representations comprise the horizon of objectivity in providing, prior to experience, or "in advance of acquiescence", the "*pure look* [*reiner Anblick*]" of objectivity, of objects in general.

What does Heidegger mean here by talking about the "look" of objectivity? To begin with, Kant says that the schema of a concept is a representation of "a general procedure

³³⁵ KRV A138/B177; A145-6/B185; my emphasis.

³³⁶ KRV A140/B179.

³³⁷ KRV A138/B177.

of the imagination for providing a concept with its *image*".³³⁸ Now, Heidegger distinguishes between three senses of "image" and thus three ways in which the image of something can be related to the "look" of the thing. Firstly, "look" can mean the immediate *empirical* "look" of something in particular. This would be the type of thing that is asked about when a detective asks, "What did the perpetrator *look* like?"³³⁹ Secondly, the "look" of something can refer to a general likeness of the thing, as, e.g., when the detective asks if the perpetrator *looks* like the man in this photograph, or in this police-sketch. Both of these senses have an *essential* reference to an "image" of some kind, either the "image" of the thing contained in the empirical representation, or the image contained in the likeness. But Kant says that the "schema is to be distinguished from the image" and is rather a *representation* of the "general procedure" for providing an image for the concept.

Heidegger says that though the schema is distinguished from images, it is "nevertheless related to something like an image" or has an "image-character [*Bildcharakter*]". This is because there is a sense in which the schema of a concept itself, in "making the concept sensible", provides the *look* of things to which the concept applies—now in a *third* sense of "look". Heidegger calls this the "schema-image [*Schema-bild*]". To see what this could mean, let's expand on Kant's example of the dog. We say there is something like the "*look*" of dogs in general, or perhaps better, "the way dogs look", that is not identical to the "empirical look" of any possible concrete dog, nor to the look conveyed by a photograph of a dog, nor to a "mental image" of a dog.

³³⁸ KRV A140/B179-80.

³³⁹ Which needn't itself be a simple *listing* of more or less prominent physical properties. The perpetrator might have "looked suspicious", or even "looked like a college student", for instance.

This is the sense conveyed by my saying that, for instance, over and above being in possession of the concept ‘dog’—i.e. knowing the rule for applying the concept, or being able to list the “marks” which belong to and delineate the concept—“I know what dogs *look like*” or “I know what a dog looks like”. This look, the “look of x in general” is, as Heidegger calls it, the *schema-image* of the concept x. The schema-image is never identical to any particular concrete image, mental or otherwise, but it is that in virtue of which images of x’s are possible.

Kant says, “[T]he schema of sensible concepts...is a product and as it were a monogram of pure a priori imagination, through which and in accordance with which the images *first become possible*.”³⁴⁰ Heidegger claims that this is true in virtue of the schema’s corresponding schema-image. It is because “I know what a dog (in general) looks like”—which would mean here, having a “schema-image of the concept dog”—that I can conjure up a mental image of a dog, or can recognize this actual dog here *as* a dog.³⁴¹ The function of the schema-image is to provide the “look of something in general”, and is thus a “making-sensible” of the concept in advance of perception so that I can recognize perceptual objects *as* determined by the rule that the concept which belongs to them specifies, that is, *as* the particular objects they are. The schema-image, Heidegger says, “shows us ‘only’ the ‘as...’ in terms of which [the thing as the thing it is] can appear”.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ KRV A141-2/B181. If one puts special emphasis on “sensible” here, it looks like Kant is denying Heidegger’s very next move, and thus can be no such thing as an entirely *pure* look. But, as Heidegger will point out, the latter can be understood along the lines of Kant’s “pure image”—e.g. time.

³⁴¹ In this case, having the schema-image is a sufficient but not necessary condition of having the mental image. I *can* know that this is a dog without knowing what dogs in general look like, if, e.g. I am told it is by a “dog-expert”. The same story applies to “pure” sensible concepts, like that of geometrical figures, to which Kant also refers in the Schematism.

³⁴² KPM 95.

So, the schema of a concept is, as Kant says, the representation of *the procedure* the imagination follows in providing an image for a concept. For Heidegger, to represent the “general procedure” is to “represent the way the rule regulates [a] sketching-out *within a possible look*”.³⁴³ This means that the schema “necessarily remains relative to possible schema-images” which are a “sketching-out” of the rule which forms, ahead of time, the horizon for the “range of possibilities” of things that the concept could apply to, that is, the range of possible ways of “following the rule”.

This initial sketching-out [*Vorzeichnung*] of the rule is no list [*Verzeichnis*] in the sense of a mere enumeration of the “features” found in [the concept, but rather] it is a “*displaying* [*Auszeichnen*]” of the whole of what is meant by [a term].³⁴⁴

But Kant says that the schema of a *pure* concept of the understanding is “something that can never be brought to an image at all”. Now what can this mean? As Heidegger points out, it presents a difficulty, since Kant had defined a schema, in general, as the representation of the method for “providing the concept with its image”, or in Heidegger’s language, as a “making the concept sensible” in advance, through the schema-image, which provides the “look in general” of things to which the concept applies. In what sense now can the schemata of *pure* concepts “never be brought to an image at all”? To answer this, we must consider how the schemata of empirical and mathematical (which are pure *and* sensible)—concepts *can* be “brought to images”. As Heidegger points out, concrete images, that is, empirical looks, *can* serve to represent the thing imaged in general. In other words, the schema-image *can* be “present” in empirical images. If, for instance, I try to teach you the concept dog, i.e. what ‘dog’ means, by

³⁴³ Ibid., italics mine.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., italics mine.

showing you a picture of a dog (saying, “dogs *look* like this”), the empirical image here is intended to represent “dogs in general”. Heidegger’s example is a house.

We say this house which is perceived, e.g., shows how a house in general appears, and consequently it shows what we represent in the concept house...Indeed, the house itself offers this determinate look, and yet we are not preoccupied with this in order to experience how precisely this house appears. Rather, this house shows itself in exactly such a way that, in order to be a house, it must not necessarily appear as it does...*What we have perceived* [in the empirical look of the house] is *the range of possible appearing as such*, or more precisely, we have perceived that which cultivates this range, that which regulates and marks out how something in general must appear in order to be able, as a house, to offer the appropriate look.³⁴⁵

The distinctiveness of both empirical and mathematical concepts lies then in the possibility that any particular empirical look can (might be able to) also offer the schema-image, the look of the thing in general. We can say that the schema-image here can be “brought to” an image, or that the empirical look can be “adequate” to the “look in general”. Pictures or drawings appended to dictionary definitions, for instance, can serve this function.

So when Kant says that the schema of pure concepts “cannot be brought to images at all”, this must mean that the schema-images of pure concepts—in contrast to the schema-images of empirical or mathematical concepts—cannot be represented, as it were, in any *empirical* look. As Heidegger insists, then, Kant is not thereby denying that a pure concept has a corresponding *schema*-image. True, no empirical look can suffice to present or display the schema-images of a pure concept as it can with an empirical concept; this just means that no empirical look can ever be adequate to it. One can ostensibly learn an empirical concept, that is, learn to correctly apply the concept in experience and thus to correctly recognize certain objects as belonging under that

³⁴⁵ KPM 94-95; italics mine.

concept, through the empirical looks they display within my experiencing them. I learn to apply the concept in an appropriate way through developing a sense of the look of the thing in general. With pure concepts it must be otherwise. No empirical experience can ever be adequate to the pure concept ‘cause’ for instance. The schema-images of pure concepts must for this reason be “pure”; and the schema-images of pure concepts must present “pure images”.³⁴⁶

The schemata of pure concepts, then, produced by the synthetic activity of the transcendental imagination, provide the schema-image(s) of *an object in general*, i.e. the “pure look” of any possible object whatsoever, and thus the “pure look of objectivity”. But, of course, Kant says that transcendental schemata are also “a priori time-determinations”. This is what allows them to be “mediating representations” between the category, which is “universal and rests on a rule a priori”, and the appearance (in the broad sense of a sensible intuition) which is subject to time as the a priori form of intuition. As a priori time-determinations, Heidegger says, “the schemata of the notions [pure concepts]...articulate the unique pure possibility of having a certain look into *a variety of pure images*”³⁴⁷. But this multiplicity of pure images is unified in the single pure image of time itself as a “formal intuition”. As Kant himself says and as Heidegger emphasizes, time itself is the “pure image” of all objects of the senses as such.³⁴⁸

As ‘pure image’, time is the schema-image and not just the form of intuition which stands over and against the pure concepts of the understanding...time is not only the necessary pure image of the schemata of the pure concepts of the understanding but also their sole, pure possibility of having a certain look. This

³⁴⁶ As Heidegger points out, Kant in several places, including in the Schematism itself, refers to time as the “pure image” of all objects of the senses.

³⁴⁷ KPM 104, italics mine.

³⁴⁸ KRV A142/B182. “Das reine Bild...aller Gegenstände der Sinne aber überhaupt [ist] die Zeit”.

unique possibility of having a certain look shows itself in itself to be nothing other than always just time and the temporal.³⁴⁹

Heidegger gives an example in the Kantbook regarding the pure concept of substance.

The schema of substance, which Kant says is the “persistence of the real in time, i.e., the representation of the real as a substratum of empirical time-determination in general”, is dependent on the pure image of time because in it “time gives the pure look of something like *lasting in general*”; it is the “*look of what lasts*”³⁵⁰.

Now, what role does Heidegger’s reading of the schematism play in his claim that transcendental imagination is the “common root”? We have seen how Heidegger interprets the goal of the transcendental deduction, which Kant said was to show how concepts can apply to objects a priori, as an unveiling of the essence of transcendence, that is, to explain how Dasein can transcend entities in having an understanding of their being. Now, the schematism proves that Dasein has an understanding of being in virtue of forming the horizon of the pure look of objectivity in advance of “experience”, the horizon within which entities show up as entities. So if the purpose of the transcendental deduction is fulfilled through the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding, which is itself accomplished through the synthetic activity of the transcendental imagination, then we can say that the pure synthesis of the transcendental imagination (the ontological synthesis) forms transcendence itself. That formative work can be described as an original “*making-sensible*” of the horizon of transcendence. Heidegger writes, “if the schematism belongs to the essence of finite knowledge and if finitude is centered in transcendence, then the occurrence of transcendence in its innermost essence

³⁴⁹ KPM 104.

³⁵⁰ KPM 107, my italics.

must be a schematism”.³⁵¹ Simply put, it is the schematism that makes transcendence possible.

So, Heidegger’s description of the central place of the schematism itself goes a long way in explaining why he thinks the transcendental imagination, which does the “schematizing”, is the “common root” between understanding and sensibility. The schematism just is the activity of the ontological synthesis, the forming of the transcendental horizon, and thus the original creation of the “preliminary understanding of being”³⁵². The ontological synthesis is the synthesis of “pure thinking” and “pure intuition”. As such, it is the unifying synthesis of both the pure concepts of the understanding on the one hand and the sensible manifold of intuition on the other, and thus the synthetic unity of the understanding and sensibility.

In my earlier discussion of Kant’s transcendental deduction³⁵³, I emphasized the precarious place of the transcendental imagination across both editions, and tried to elucidate the sense in which the imagination was there, as Heidegger says, *heimatlos*. At issue was the tension between Kant’s claim that there are “three original sources” which contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience (sense, imagination, apperception), and his claim that there are “two fundamental sources of cognition [receptivity of impressions and the spontaneity of concepts]” and thus two “stems” of cognition [understanding and sensibility].³⁵⁴ And, though he attributes original synthetic

³⁵¹ KPM 101.

³⁵² Of course, we have here already the fundamental claim of *Being and Time* that any understanding of being must be essentially temporal.

³⁵³ See Part I §2b.

³⁵⁴ KRV A94; A50/B74. Though its true that the former is only in the A-edition, but Kant leaves in essentially the same claim at A155/B194, where there are “three sources” of a priori representations [time as the a priori form of inner sense, imagination, and apperception].

activity in the B-edition to the faculty of understanding, he continues to call the imagination there the faculty of “synthesis in general”. The imagination on the one hand is a spontaneous faculty, but on the other “belongs to sensibility” and is thus ostensibly a receptive faculty. I said, at the very least, the transient and uncertain place of the imagination within the deduction(s) problematizes an easy identification of the dualism between understanding and sensibility with the dualism of spontaneity and receptivity. Additionally, I argued against Henrich’s insistence that the common root was in principle impossible for Kant. I maintained that at best Henrich had shown two things, 1) that the common root cannot be conceived of as a kind of “basic power” [*Grundkraft*] in the Wolffian sense, and 2) that a genuine identification of any faculty as the common root is subject to the following criterion: namely that this faculty “render intelligible the faculties it grounds”.

If Heidegger’s claim, which I have tried to defend, that the purpose of the transcendental deduction is fulfilled by the schematism is legitimate, then it seems as if we have indeed “found a home” for the transcendental imagination. The schematism puts the imagination, as Heidegger phrases it, at “the formative center [*die bildende Mitte*] of ontological knowledge”, but this doesn’t itself amount to positively identifying it as the “common root”; in particular it doesn’t itself demonstrate that the criterion for such an identification, which we derived from Henrich, is satisfied. We should first remark that Heidegger explicitly denies that the imagination could be the common root in virtue of being a “basic power” in the Wolffian sense. The transcendental power of imagination, he says,

is not something that could be thought of as a ‘basic power [*Grundkraft*]’ in the soul. Nothing lies further from this going-back into the essential origin of

transcendence than the monistic-empirical explanation of the remaining faculties of the soul based on the power of imagination.³⁵⁵

And this because the very idea of a basic power in the sense it has in Wolffian faculty-psychology depends, as we have seen, on conceiving ‘power’ as “the relation of an accident to the substance in which it inheres”. Henrich writes, correctly, that Wolff’s “reduction of the powers of the faculty of knowledge to one basic power was not motivated by reasons that lie in the structure of the subject itself. Rather, those reasons stem from his attempt to turn the Leibnizian concept of substance into the foundation of a systematic psychology.”

But Heidegger, by contrast, is precisely motivated by “reasons that lie in the structure of the subject”.

This intention [that is, the ‘monistic-empirical explanation’ which we can here identify as Wolff’s faculty-psychological strategy] is already self-prohibitive because in the end the essential unveiling of transcendence decides in the first place the sense in which one is permitted to speak of ‘soul’ or ‘mind’, the extent to which these concepts originally meet the ontologico-metaphysical essence of human beings.³⁵⁶

In simpler terms, Wolff’s strategy is ruled out because it depends on a substance-ontology that the “transcendental strategy” which Heidegger is pursuing—which rests on the claim that subjectivity is not a substance, not any kind of “thing” at all—has determined to be false. So for Heidegger then,

To understand the faculties of ‘our mind’ as ‘transcendental faculties’ means in the first place to unveil them according to how they make the essence of transcendence possible. Faculty thus does not mean a ‘basic power’ which is at hand in the soul. ‘Faculty [*Vermögen*]’ now means what such a phenomenon [as mind] ‘is able to do’ [*was ein solches Phänomen ‘vermag’*], in the sense of *the making-possible of the essential structure of transcendence*... Thus understood, the transcendental power of imagination is not just, first and foremost, a faculty

³⁵⁵ KPM 139.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

found between pure intuition and pure thinking. Rather, together with these, it is a ‘basic ability to do [*Grundvermögen*]’ as a *making-possible of the original unity of both* and with it the essential unity of transcendence as a whole.³⁵⁷

To say that imagination is not just the faculty “between” the others is to say that it is not just an “external bond which fastens together two ends”. It is rather “original unifying” which “forms the unity of both of the others, which themselves have an essential *structural* relation to it.” But what exactly does Heidegger mean when he says that imagination makes possible the “original unity” of both understanding and sensibility? There are two crucial considerations here which we can indicate through the following two passages from Kant. The first is from the first *Critique*. Kant says that understanding and sensibility “cannot exchange their functions [*Funktionen*]”; and while “only from their unification can cognition arise”, he goes on to insist that “on this account one *must not mix up their roles* [*ihren Anteil vermischen*], rather one has great cause to separate them carefully from each other and distinguish them.”³⁵⁸ The second is contained in what I will call the “heterogeneity passage”, from the *Anthropology*, which was emphasized by Henrich:

Despite their dissimilarity, understanding and sensibility by themselves form a close union for bringing about our cognition, as if one had the origin in the other, *or both originated from a common origin; but this cannot be, or at least we cannot conceive how dissimilar things could sprout from one and the same root.*³⁵⁹

When Kant says that understanding and sensibility have different functions and parts to play in cognition—the heterogeneity of which makes it hard to conceive of them as

³⁵⁷ KPM 134, my italics.

³⁵⁸ KRV A51-52/B75-76, my emphasis.

³⁵⁹ GS VII 177, my emphasis. But note at the outset that they cannot be so *completely* heterogeneous because, as Heidegger points out, they are both “species of representings” which must belong to the same genus of representings in general. Both concepts and intuitions are *representations* for Kant.

having a common origin and makes it thus important to keep them separated—he must have in mind that understanding is above all a faculty of spontaneity and activity, and sensibility is a faculty of receptivity and passivity. If imagination is to be the common root of these so heterogeneous stems, then it must be shown how imagination is the “ground in such a way that it lets the stems grow out of itself, lending them support and stability”, while at the same time preserving their independent functions. The stems must remain separate stems with their own distinct and independent structures. The point of “unveiling the original unity” of these two functions is to show how “the *structure* of these faculties has been rooted in the *structure* of the transcendental imagination.”³⁶⁰

The main challenge here, of course—and the main reason for thinking that it would be “inconceivable” for any faculty to be the root for both stems—is that the imagination would then have to be “structurally” both active and passive, spontaneous and receptive. And not just in the sense that it “can be both”, i.e. that it itself has these two capabilities, side-by-side and “apart from each other”, as it were, which would be no mystery; but that it must be both *at the same time and in the same respect*. This is just what Heidegger attributes to transcendental imagination. It is simultaneously receptive and spontaneous, and in “this ‘simultaneously’ lies the proper essence of its structure”.³⁶¹ It is the “original unity of receptivity and spontaneity, and not a unity which was composite from the first”³⁶².

We can make some headway into how this could be if we recall what the structure of the transcendental imagination, as original synthetic activity, is. That imagination forms

³⁶⁰ KPM 138, my italics.

³⁶¹ KPM 129.

³⁶² KPM 153.

the horizon of objectivity means that it is a self-orienting turning-towards which lets something stand in opposition, or more simply, lets something be an object, existing in its own right. As a schematism, it is a self-giving of a pure look which lets objects appear *as* the objects they are, i.e. lets them look the way they look. Clearly both of these formulations are meant to capture both the activity and the passivity of the phenomenon. In the self-directed turning-toward, in the *giving* of the pure look, I am active and spontaneous. In the standing-in-opposition of the object, in the look being the look *of the object*, I am passive and receptive. I am beholden to, bound by, the independent features of the object as the object *it* is. The very phrase “making-sensible” is meant to evoke this simultaneous activity and passivity; it means “acting in such a way that objects are able to affect me”.

Is this enough, or is being active and passive at the same time and in the same respect something, as Kant says, we simply “cannot conceive”? It seems to me that there are lots of ordinary everyday cases. We can take as a paradigm example the phenomenon of “accepting a gift”. Clearly in such a case I am passive; I am the “recipient” of the gift. But in *accepting* the gift, I am also *doing* something, I am active. If you offer me some money and I demur, simply putting the money in my hand or slipping it into my pocket unawares—in which case I would be “merely passive”—then this no longer counts as my *accepting* the gift at all, in the essential meaning of the phenomenon. In the totality of the meaningful action “accepting a gift” which has been offered, I am active in the very moment of receiving it. Another example would be “listening”. The command to “Listen!” is a call to an action of a certain sort, but it is an activity that can only be fulfilled *through* a certain kind of passivity, it is an activity that *consists* in being passive.

We can understand how the imagination for Heidegger is simultaneously spontaneous and receptive in essentially the same way. We would misunderstand what Heidegger means by “forming the horizon”—and what Kant means by “synthetic activity” for that matter—if we took it to mean that the imagination is *first* active, first “sets up” the horizon, and *then* is passive, simply waiting for things to show up in it, or to “bounce up against it”. It is not a matter of “acting or doing something now so that later I can sit back and be passive”, akin to opening up a post office box. It is similarly misleading to describe it as “being active *in order to be* passive”, like getting all the chores done so you can go lie on the couch. It is rather an activity that is at the same time and *in the same respect* passive. “In the same respect” here is “in respect to” the function of *transcending*. In a quite literal sense, the activity of ontological synthesis *is*, amounts to, a passivity; it *constitutes* passivity, and vice versa. The synthetic activity is truly receptive *insofar as* it is spontaneous—what it *means* to be receptive *to the object* is to “take it in”, to acquiesce to it, which is after all something *I do*. Likewise, it is spontaneous insofar as it is receptive—what it *means* to spontaneously synthesize a “manifold *in intuition*”, which means I am “affected” by objects, is to make myself open to the way the object exists *in its own right*, i.e. what it is “objectively”, which is after all something to which in cognition I must be passive, something that I do not, and am not attempting to, control. I must let myself be “guided” by the object, but this is not the same as just being dragged around helplessly by it.³⁶³

³⁶³ Paradigmatically, this theme is present in *Being and Time* in the form of Heidegger’s description of *disclosure* as a “letting be [*Seinlassen*]”. For an invaluable discussion of this, see Haugeland’s article “Letting Be” in *Transcendental Heidegger*, ed. by Crowell and Malpas. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007. Indeed, I think this phenomena of the inextricability of the senses of “active” and “passive” is much more pervasive than it might seem, and that it is perhaps *more* difficult to spell out cases of *pure* activity or *pure* passivity. I am tempted to say, though it would perhaps be an overstatement, that these latter categories can most naturally be associated only with “domain of objects” as opposed to the “domain of the

So the fact that transcendental imagination is *structurally* both spontaneous and receptive goes some way in showing how the structures of understanding as spontaneous and sensibility as receptive can be grounded in it. But we still haven't made good on Henrich's "intelligibility criterion". To be the common root, the faculty of imagination must "make intelligible" the other faculties in the sense of making them possible, of demonstrating that they are what they are, and have the functions they do, in virtue of being rooted in the faculty of imagination. Indeed Heidegger calls the transcendental imagination the "condition of the possibility of all faculties".³⁶⁴ And he claims both that the transcendental power of imagination "makes it possible for pure intuition to be what it really can be" and that understanding as pure thinking must "spring forth from [it] in order to be able to be what it is."³⁶⁵

The separate functions of the two stems must remain distinct, as Kant insists, and yet these respective functions must be shown to be possible and intelligible as the functions they are on the basis of being rooted—"originally unified"—in the transcendental imagination. Heidegger's case will be most convincing if we keep in the foreground the fact that the respective faculties should be considered as functions *within cognition*, for the purpose of cognition. For while if we insist on considering each stem *in isolation* from the other, then we see that their respective distinctive features are spontaneity in the case of understanding (the "conceptual or mediate element" in cognition), and receptivity

human", and that in most aspects of human action and interaction the dichotomy is not so easily drawn. This would mean that another way we can understand the *ontological asymmetry* between persons and things is that the "behavior" of persons can be characterized by just this inextricability. This generalization would of course then make sense in Heideggerian terms, since the essence of transcendence *is* the essence of Dasein, and thus of "the human".

³⁶⁴KPM 147.

³⁶⁵ KPM 139, 154.

in the case of intuition (the “immediate or given” element in cognition); but as functions for the purpose of cognition, these two functions must be complementary and cooperative. As such, they must be understood as “ready to cooperate”, that is, they must be such that they are *already* in themselves able to “work together” to produce cognition. These respective functions are co-dependent; the pure understanding can’t perform its proper function within cognition without pure intuition, and vice versa. The claim that they are both rooted in transcendental imagination—meaning that they “originally belong together” there—is meant to explain, to make intelligible, how these two functions can be thus already prepared to cooperate with each other, despite their apparent heterogeneity when considered in isolation from each other.

The question concerning the essential unity of pure intuition and pure thinking is the result of the previous isolation of these elements. Hence the character of their unity may be sketched out initially in such a way that it shows how each of these elements structurally supports the other. They indicate joints [*Fugen*] which point in advance to a having-been-joined-together [*Ineinandergefügt*]. The [ontological synthesis of transcendental imagination] then is that which not only fits into these joints, thereby joining the elements, but rather *what makes these joints “fit” in the first place* [*was diese Fugen allererst “fügt”*].³⁶⁶

We can say that it is the mutual grounding in transcendental imagination—whose essential function is to structure transcendence—which makes each of the other two faculties not only “fit” together, and thus “fit for” each other, but also what makes each “fit to” (ready to) contribute together to this end, what makes them adapted and qualified for such cooperation.

With this in mind, Heidegger insists that pure intuition, in its functioning within cognition, must be not just a “mere” receptivity, but rather a *spontaneous* receptivity;

³⁶⁶ KPM 61, my italics, translation amended. Though Heidegger says “veritative synthesis” here, it is clear in context that this is just another name for ontological synthesis.

likewise, pure understanding is not just “mere” spontaneity, but a *receptive* spontaneity.

What does this mean?

The case of pure intuition is perhaps easier. Pure intuition qua pure is not just the a priori form of intuition but the a priori formal intuition of space and time themselves. As such they are, Kant says, singular and individual representations.³⁶⁷ Pure intuiting is the pure representing of space and time, as “intuitables”³⁶⁸. This representing, precisely because it is a priori and pure, and not based in or derived from experience, must be considered “spontaneous” in some sense. Space and time as representations are formed rather in the “synopsis”, the synthetic unity of apprehension; and as synthetic unities, they presuppose a synthesis, and thus a synthetic activity which forms them. Pure intuiting forms, we can say, the pure “spatio-temporal look” of objects in general, which Heidegger describes as a look which is “*self-given*”—from out of itself, i.e. spontaneous. The synthesis of apprehension is after all the work of the transcendental imagination, so that Heidegger can say, “on the grounds of its essence, pure intuiting *is* pure imagination”.³⁶⁹ But intuition doesn’t thereby lose its separate identity, its distinctive role or function within cognition. Kant, as does Heidegger after him, insists that the unity which belongs to space and time as singular representations is not the “unity which characterizes the universality of a concept”³⁷⁰. Through the synthesis of apprehension

³⁶⁷ KRV B136fn. “Space and Time and all their parts are intuitions, thus individual representations along with the manifold that they contain in themselves.” See also B160. “But space and time are represented a priori not merely as forms of sensible intuition, but as intuitions themselves...”

³⁶⁸ Kant calls them *ens imaginarium* A291/B347; but they are not thereby *objects* of intuition, or intuited objects.

³⁶⁹ KPM 143, my italics.

³⁷⁰ KPM 142. See also KRV B160fn.: “[T]he formal intuition gives unity of the representation. In the Aesthetic I ascribed this unity merely to sensibility, only in order to note that it precedes all concepts, though to be sure it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to the senses but through which all concepts of space and time first become possible.”

“space and time are first given as intuitions, [but] the unity of this *a priori* intuition belongs to space and time, and not the concept of the understanding”³⁷¹.

The case of pure understanding is more difficult. That *intuition* could be rooted in imagination is perhaps not surprising at all if the synthesis of imagination is, as Kant says, “although exercised *a priori*, is nevertheless *always sensible*.”³⁷² It can seem as if the analogous attempt to root the understanding in a faculty of sensibility would amount to an “obvious absurdity”, as Heidegger admits. The pure understanding must be able to “stand on its own”, that is, remain independent of all concrete empirical content, if it is to be able to achieve the kind of generality that is essential to logic. The key here is Kant’s insistence that all uses of the understanding, logic included, must be seen as derived from the synthetic unity of **apperception**. Famously, the latter is “*the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic...indeed this faculty is the understanding itself*.”³⁷³ In Heidegger’s language, we can say that the faculty of transcendental apperception, which brings about the synthetic unity of apperception, is the *primordial* use of the understanding, it is its *essential* function.

As a unifying, synthetic activity which is fundamentally regulated by the possibility of an accompanying “I think” to the unified manifold, the synthetic activity is a “pure self-orienting [*reines Sich-Zuwenden*]”. But the whole point of the Deduction was to show that the unity of apperception is identical to the unity of the manifold under the categories, i.e. according to the concept of an object in general. “The I is the ‘vehicle’ of the categories insofar as this preliminary self-orienting brings the categories to the point

³⁷¹ KRV B160fn.

³⁷² KRV A124.

³⁷³ KRV B134fn., italics added.

where, as *represented regulative unities* [*vorgestellte regelnde Einheiten*], they can unify.”³⁷⁴ The indispensable point here is that though this synthetic activity is a “free, forming, and projecting ‘conceiving’ of something”, which highlights its spontaneity and makes its rootedness in imagination intelligible, it is precisely a unifying activity which is not random or haphazard, but strictly governed by necessary rules which are the regulative unities that the categories represent.

The fundamental character of the unity of transcendental apperception that is constantly unifying in advance is opposed to everything random. Hence, in the representing self-orienting, only this opposition and no other is taken up. The free, formative projecting of the affinity³⁷⁵ is in itself a representing, acquiescent compliance with (or submission to) it [*ein vorstellend hinnehmendes Sich-unterwerfen*].³⁷⁶

So the understanding, as synthetic, apperceptive activity, is not just a “mere” spontaneity, but a *receptive* spontaneity, because its free-formative activity is precisely defined by compliance or submission to *rules*, i.e. the categories as regulative unities. In cognition, the understanding is, in Heidegger’s words, “in the service” of the intuition, and thus in the service of *acquiescence* to the objects as the objects they are. Its function in cognition is to *determine* the manifold of intuition according to rules to which it has “already submitted”. The synthetic activity of understanding has placed itself under “a self-given necessity”. “The rules of binding together [*Regeln des Verbindens*] (synthesis) are represented” in the understanding, as the faculty of rules, “precisely as *binding* [*bindende*] in their binding character [*Verbindlichkeit*].”³⁷⁷ But these rules are what serve

³⁷⁴ KPM 150.

³⁷⁵ Kant defines the “affinity” of the manifold as “the ground of the possibility of the association of the manifold insofar as it lies in the object” and as a “thoroughgoing connection according to necessary laws”. KRV A113-4.

³⁷⁶ KPM 154.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

to constitute the objectivity *of the objects* of experience. If pure intuiting formed the “pure spatio-temporal look” of objectivity, then we can say that the pure understanding forms the “pure ‘ordered, regular and regulated’ look” of objectivity.

In this way, the criterion of the common root which we derived from Henrich’s criticism is meant to be fulfilled. Each of the stems is made intelligible as the particular faculties they are, with their distinctive functions within cognition, on the basis of the structural unity of the transcendental imagination. It is because pure intuition—whose function is to produce the pure spatial-temporal look of things—is a spontaneous receptivity that makes it able to contribute to cognition. And it is because pure understanding—whose function is to guide and regulate the synthesis through rules to which it is bound—is a receptive spontaneity that makes it able to contribute to cognition. And both are able to be such in virtue of being rooted in the original synthetic activity of imagination, with is both spontaneous and receptive at the same time and in the same respect. The transcendental imagination is “in itself essentially spontaneous receptivity and receptive spontaneity. Only in this unity can pure sensibility as spontaneous receptivity and pure apperception as receptive spontaneity belong together and form *the unified essence of a finite, pure, sensible reason*.”³⁷⁸

c) Transcendence as Ontological Self-Constitution

The last phrase in the latter quoted passage reveals that like the early Idealists, Heidegger saw the problem of the common root—the problem of the unity of theoretical reason—to

³⁷⁸ KPM 197, my emphases.

be intimately connected to the problem of the “unity of reason” as a whole. A solution to the former holds immediate promise in also serving as a solution to the latter. Indeed, in a passage which we will quickly pass over here because we will return to this theme later, Heidegger “risks” another step and attempts to show that the structure of *practical* reason as Kant conceives of it is also grounded in the transcendental power of imagination. His description of the pure understanding as a receptive spontaneity already suggests this. Such a spontaneity already represents the “freedom” involved in “placing oneself under a self-given necessity”. This is also the structure of autonomy and of the moral feeling of “respect for law”. “The essential structure of respect in itself allows the original constitution of the transcendental power of imagination to emerge. The self-submitting, immediate surrender-to...is pure receptivity; the free self-profession of the law, however, is pure spontaneity. In themselves, both are originally one...and they form the unreflective acting being of the self [*Selbstsein*].”³⁷⁹

Besides the claim regarding the intimate connection between the common root and the unity of reason, to which we return in the next section, there are two other main features of Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant which highlight the affinity with Fichte’s engagement with Kant. The first is the insistence that Kant’s transcendental philosophy necessitates a metaphysical claim about the sui generis ontological character of human subjectivity. For Heidegger this claim can be cashed out in terms of what I called “ontological asymmetry”, namely that subjectivity, or selfhood, can never be conceived of in the same terms which are appropriate for talking about “things”. The second main claim is that selfhood, as opposed to thinghood, is ontologically distinguished by being

³⁷⁹ KPM 159-160.

self-constituting. The first was treated in the beginning of this chapter, so we can now turn to the second.

We have seen the way in which, for Heidegger, the transcendental power of imagination affects the “self-forming of transcendence and its horizons”³⁸⁰ and that, in turn, “transcendence determines the being-a-self of the finite self”³⁸¹. This means that selfhood, the ontological structure of being-a-self, is self-constituting. To see this clearly, we should return, as we did with Fichte, to the *locus classicus* in Kant regarding this theme, namely the footnote at B157-158.³⁸² Kant says that originary synthetic activity—which is “expressed” by the apperceptive ‘I think’—determines my existence. The existence is given, but not the existence qua self-active being. For while I have a self-intuition “which is grounded in an *a priori* given form, i.e. time, which is sensible and belongs to the receptivity of the determinable...I do not have yet another self-intuition, which would give the **determining** in me, the spontaneity of which alone I am conscious, *even before* the act of **determination**, in the same way as time gives that which is to be determined”. We have seen how Fichte’s notion of intellectual intuition was precisely meant to fit the bill of such a self-intuition of existence qua self-active being. But, importantly, we should not see intellectual intuition for Fichte as giving “the determining

³⁸⁰ KPM 89.

³⁸¹ KPM 188.

³⁸² For reference, I give the whole passage again: “The **I think** expresses the act of determining my existence. The existence is thereby given, but the way in which I am to determinate it, i.e., the manifold that I am to posit in myself as belonging to it, is not thereby given. For that self-intuition is required, which is grounded in an *a priori* given form, i.e. time, which is sensible and belongs to the receptivity of the determinable. Now I do not have yet another self-intuition, which would give the **determining** in me, the spontaneity of which alone I am conscious, *even before* the act of **determination**, in the same way as time gives that which is to be determined, thus I *cannot determine my existence as that of a self-active being* [*eines selbsttätigen Wesens*], rather I *merely represent the spontaneity of my thought*, i.e., of the determining, and my existence always remains only sensibly determinable, i.e., determinable as the existence of an appearance. Yet this spontaneity is the reason I call myself an **intelligence**.”

in me...*before* the act of determination”, but rather *in* the very act of determination. This is the point of calling self-positing a *self-constituting* activity. The latter is an activity which constitutes the being of the active “entity”—which is nowise to be seen as a thing existing prior to or independently of its essential activity. Rather, the (*sui generis*) activity of self-positing *is* the being of the pure I; the activity constitutes the being of the I and makes it what it is in the first place.

Heidegger’s interpretation is remarkably similar. For him as well, we do in fact have “another” self-intuition which immediately “gives” the self as a self-active entity, namely the transcendental imagination in its schematizing activity of ontological synthesis. In its functioning to provide *a priori* time-determinations, it serves to, as even Kant says, “generate time itself.” This is where the interpretation of imagination as the common root has significant consequences. As Heidegger points out, this passage in Kant lies within the context of the latter’s restriction of self-knowledge to the empirical self within inner sense, and furthermore, belongs to the B-edition of the Deduction where Kant attributes all spontaneity to the pure understanding as the faculty for using categories. Kant’s point here is that since all legitimate use of the categories requires a sensible manifold grounded in the form of time—“the receptivity of the determinable”—the categories, which are required for knowledge, cannot be applied to the self abstracted from this sensible form, i.e. to the self *as determining*, i.e. over and above the self *as determinable*. In a passage in the *Grundprobleme*, in which Heidegger discusses precisely this footnote, he says:

Kant is wholly right when he declares the categories, as fundamental concepts of nature, unsuitable for determining the I. But in that way he has only shown negatively that the categories, which were tailored to fit other entities, nature,

break down here. He has not shown that the ‘I act’ itself cannot be interpreted in the way in which it gives itself in this self-manifesting ontological constitution.³⁸³

But “the way in which activity gives itself in a self-manifesting ontological constitution” is precisely through the ontological synthesis of schematism. In the transcendental schematism, as we have seen, the self, in its imaginative synthetic activity, *forms transcendence*, and thus the ontological horizon, “from out of itself”; it is then the *self-forming* of transcendence. Now, the “way” in which the self-forming ontological horizon manifests itself is through *a priori time*-determinations. Because the activity of the “I act” fundamentally takes the form of *a priori* synthetic time-determinations, the ontological horizon—the possibility of having a certain look—which is thereby generated in the ontological synthesis can be described as “just time and the temporal”. The pure look of objectivity formed in the ontological synthesis can also be described then as the pure look of temporality. Objectivity, considered from the “pure standpoint”, “looks” temporal.

In line with and expanding on Kant’s brief remark that in the schematism, the (synoptic) imagination “generates time itself”, Heidegger attempts in §33 of the Kantbook to demonstrate how each of the three pure syntheses of the imagination functions as “time-forming”, indeed how each respectively functions to form each of the ecstatic dimensions of “original time”, namely the past, present, and future.³⁸⁴ Heidegger remarks that the fact that each of the syntheses is “time-forming” constitutes the “ultimate, decisive proof” that the transcendental power of imagination is the root of both stems, and that the former has an “inner temporal character [innere Zeitcharakter]”. This

³⁸³ GP 206, my italics, which in the original read: “...wie es sich gibt, in dieser sich bekundenden ontologischen Verfassung”.

³⁸⁴ I pass over the specific arguments because they are tangential to the point at hand.

causes Heidegger to make the crucial claim that “time is pure self-affection”. If time is pure self-affection, we can understand it as precisely fulfilling the criterion for being “another self-intuition” which gives the self as a self-active being.

Time is only pure intuition to the extent that it prepares the look of succession from *out of itself*... This pure intuition *activates itself* with the intuited which was formed in it, i.e. which was formed without the aid of experience. According to its essence, time is pure affection of itself... As pure self-affection, time is not an acting affection that strikes a self which is at hand. Instead, *it forms the essence of something like self-activating*. However, if it belongs to the essence of the finite subject to be able to be activated as a self, then time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity.³⁸⁵

To say that pure intuition “activates itself” is to say that it is spontaneous; indeed as Heidegger says here, it is the essence of spontaneity as self-activity. But time as pure intuition also means a *pure* acquiescence, that is, an acquiescence abstracted from experience. This means that the self is affected by itself “free from experience”, i.e. it is affected in this regard *wholly* by itself, and so is a “self-intuition”. Heidegger attempts to find evidence for this view in a passage from the Aesthetic:

The form of intuition [time], which, since it does not represent anything except insofar as something is posited in the mind, can be nothing other than *the way in which the mind is affected by its own activity*, namely through itself.³⁸⁶

But something is amiss here, which points to a larger interpretative difficulty. This has been pointed out by Daniel Dahlstrom.³⁸⁷ Kant says that time is the way the *mind* affects *itself* (so that the *mind* is self-affecting, through time as pure intuition), not that *time* is self-affection, or that time affects itself. So to *identify* ‘time’ and ‘pure self-affection’ is, Dahlstrom says, “a true but misleading representation of Kant’s remark”,

³⁸⁵ KPM 189, italics mine.

³⁸⁶ KRV B67-68.

³⁸⁷ Dahlstrom, “Heidegger’s Kantian Turn: Notes to His Commentary on the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*”, in *Review of Metaphysics* 45 (December 1991): 329-361.

and “at best metonymic from a Kantian point of view”.³⁸⁸ This seems right to me, and it points to an ambiguous and problematic aspect of Heidegger’s way of talking here.

There is indeed a difference between saying that:

- (1) “time affects itself”, and
- (2) time is the *manner* in which “the *mind* affects itself”.

And this makes a difference to my reading because if Heidegger means the former *in exclusion of* the latter, in accordance with a quite literal meaning of his words, then the proper way to put the claim in question would not be that subjectivity, *being-a-self*—in its essential forming of transcendence—is self-constituting, but that *time* is self-constituting, and (thereby, somehow) time constitutes being-a-self. Dasein, then, is itself not properly self-constituting, but is rather constituted *by* “time”. If it is true that Heidegger is accepting that (1) and (2) are distinct, and that he is choosing (1) to the exclusion of (2), so that time is self-affecting (*but not the self*), then we really haven’t fulfilled the criterion for identifying “another self-intuition” in Kant’s passage above, because it wouldn’t be a self-intuition which would amount to a *self*-determination, i.e. *my* determination of *my* existence qua self-active being. Dahlstrom’s point is that if this is true, then Heidegger isn’t really being fair to *Kant*’s point here, but beyond that, if this is true, it would mean that Heidegger’s point would not really reflect *Fichte*’s insight here.³⁸⁹

I will be arguing in a moment that Heidegger rather means that (1) and (2) are making the same claim, and are thus not distinct, so no choice is required. But in fact it must be acknowledged that it sometimes looks as if Heidegger *is* making this distinction in so

³⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 353.

³⁸⁹ This might not be entirely problematic for my project here; if all of this is true, then Heidegger would be simply more like Hegel than Fichte. See footnote 391 below.

talking about *time* as self-affection, rather than the *self* affecting itself by way of time, that is, temporally. In the *Grundprobleme* passage quoted above, he seems to gloss Kant's words in the *locus classicus* by admitting that "we have no self-*intuition* of our self".³⁹⁰ And immediately after insisting that Kant has not ruled out an interpretation of the 'I act' as a self-manifesting ontological constitution, he says, "perhaps it is precisely time which is the a priori of the I—time, to be sure, in a more original sense than Kant was able to conceive it." Moreover, in the Kantbook itself, Heidegger says several things that make it seem as if these structures—the structure of time (now conceived of as "original time") on the one hand and the structure of being-a-self on the other—are *different*, and that rather than identifying them, we should see the former as having a kind of priority over the latter.

Kant's laying of the ground for metaphysics leads to the transcendental power of imagination. This is the root of both stems, sensibility and understanding. As such, it makes possible the original unity of ontological synthesis. *This root, however, is rooted in original time [Diese Wurzel ist in der ursprünglichen Zeit verwurzelt]*. The original ground which becomes manifest in the ground-laying is time.³⁹¹

Rather than an *identity* between the structure of original transcendence with the structure of temporality, Heidegger can seem to be suggesting a *grounding* relation. Original time seems to be described as a *distinct* root which grounds the root which itself in turn grounds pure understanding and pure sensibility.

Furthermore, Heidegger says that the attempt to "show the self as temporal" *cannot succeed*, but rather that what has been shown—indeed what is "undisputed"—is that

³⁹⁰ GP 206, italics are Heidegger's.

³⁹¹ KPM 202.

“time as such has the character of selfhood”³⁹²; so that the elucidation of the “temporal character of the subject is *first permitted only on the basis of* the “correctly understood subjective character of time”, which latter, in context, clearly refers to this same conception of time as having “the character of selfhood”.³⁹³ Finally it is only because “original time” has the “character of selfhood” that allows it to be the “ground for the possibility of selfhood” and what “first makes the mind into a mind”. This is by the lights of my reading an exceedingly odd way of talking, even by Heideggerian standards, and it is hard to make sense of. Instead of saying that original time grounds selfhood because it has “the character of selfhood”, whatever that could mean, why is it not enough to simply say that “selfhood has an essentially temporal character?”

This is an issue that ramifies fairly widely in interpreting Heidegger. The key claim that I want to attribute to Heidegger, which would align him with the basic Fichtean move, is that subjectivity, being-a-self, is self-constituting. One of the clearest expressions of this claim would be, for instance, in another essay from this period, “Vom Wesen des Grundes”: “In coming towards itself from out of a world, *Dasein produces itself as a self* [*Dasein zeitigt sich als ein Selbst*], i.e. as a being entrusted with having to be.”³⁹⁴ *Zeitigen* is a fairly common word which in ordinary usage means to produce, give rise to, or to bring about or result in. The reflexive *sich zeitigen* is unusual, but taking the cue from the non-reflexive use, we can assume it means to produce *itself*, or to give rise to itself, or to bring itself about. In my parlance, this means *Dasein* “constitutes” itself—gives rise to its own *Seinsverfassung* as a *Selbstsein* through its own essential activity of

³⁹² KPM 187-188.

³⁹³ KPM 188.

³⁹⁴ “Vom Wesen des Grundes” [hereafter VWG] in *Wegmarken*, Klostermann, 2004. p. 157. See also SZ 365: “Sofern *Dasein* sich zeitigt, *ist* auch eine Welt.”

forming the horizon of transcendence, i.e. its understanding of being. But of course Heidegger also wants us to note the root *Zeit* here, so that the standard translation is “to temporalize”. This would yield, “Dasein temporalizes itself as a self”, which would signal that Dasein’s essential activity of imagination is “to make temporal”, i.e. to make subject to *a priori* time-determinations. To say that this self-activity of imagination is a self-affecting and a self-intuiting is just to say that in so constituting itself, Dasein *makes itself* temporal. Combining the two meanings of *zeitigen*, we can understand that Dasein gives rise to itself in and through the activity of *making itself temporal*.

The problem is that in *Being and Time* in particular the more typical claim is not that *Dasein zeitigt sich* but rather, *die Zeitlichkeit zeitigt sich*—which would mean that “temporality temporalizes itself” and then “temporality is self-constituting”. So again, it can *look* as if “temporality” is a separate structure, as if the structure of temporality is not identical to the structure of Dasein’s *Seinverfassung*.

But this is, I want to maintain, a mistake. First of all, Heidegger identifies, in *Being and Time*, “temporality” with “original time”, on the principle, he says, of ‘a potiori fit denominatio’.³⁹⁵ Now, similarly, it seems to me, in the Kantbook, he identifies, for reasons we can now understand, the activity of self-constitution and the activity of “temporalization”. Then, precisely on the same principle of ‘a potiori fit denominatio’, he identifies the transcendental imagination with “original time”. Heidegger seems to proceed in this way:

If the transcendental power of imagination, as the pure, forming faculty, in itself forms time—i.e. allows time to spring forth—then we cannot avoid any longer the thesis that the transcendental power of imagination *is* original time.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ See SZ 377.

³⁹⁶ KPM 187; my italics. Consider also, “das Ich so sehr ‘zeitlich’ ist, daß es die Zeit selbst ist”.

When Heidegger says that the “imagination *is* time”, or that the I or the self *is* time, he means simply, I am arguing, that original synthesis, and thus selfhood, is “*temporal* through and through”, or that “the selfhood of the self is *inherently* temporal”. The structure of selfhood and the structure of temporality are identical. So in the identity of time and pure self-affection which is at issue, “time” here means “original time”, which means “temporality”. As we will see later in the discussion of *Being and Time*, the structure of being-a-self (authentically) just is “temporality”. “Dasein has the definite character of temporality” and “temporality reveals itself as the *meaning* of authentic care.”³⁹⁷

So for Heidegger, (1) and (2) are not distinct options, but rather are different ways of saying the same thing: Dasein, being-a-self, constitutes itself in and through its activity of forming the horizon of transcendence; this forming is also the forming of time, so the self-forming of the horizon has an essentially temporal character [*Zeitcharakter*]. To say that (original) time is pure self-affection is just to say that Dasein affects itself purely in virtue of temporalizing itself, in virtue of “making itself temporal”. In temporalizing itself (i.e. purely), Dasein constitutes itself as temporal.

In spite of Heidegger’s apparent misgivings in the *Grundprobleme*, then, it is not inappropriate to call Dasein’s self-temporalization a self-intuition *of the self*³⁹⁸, i.e. an *intuition* of itself qua *active* entity. This is because we have already arrived at a conception of the transcendental power of imagination as both spontaneous and receptive at the same time and in the same respect. The self-affection which essentially belongs to

³⁹⁷ SZ 326.

³⁹⁸ Though perhaps we might want to qualify this as a self-intuition of the *authentic* self, for reasons we will see later.

the structure of being-a-self is the self-forming of transcendence, which as we have seen, is essentially *acquiescent* and thus *finite* and dependent on “entities which do not have Dasein’s way of being”. Intuition means “immediate relation” to an object, and human finite intuition is sensible because it requires being *affected* by objects. But *pure* intuition means *self*-affection—in abstraction from experience, from affection by objects—i.e. the self-giving of the pure look of objectivity. This means “pure acquiescence”, an active “giving oneself” over to the object in general, an actively assumed stance of receptivity. In assuming this stance, Dasein affects itself, makes itself temporal. So this is indeed “another self-intuition” in Kant’s sense, if the “first” intuition is “what belongs to the receptivity of the determinable”, i.e. receptivity *to* other entities. The whole point after all is that it is a condition of the possibility of being receptive to other entities, of acquiescing to other entities, that Dasein, in its own being, is *purely* acquiescent, that is, produces the *pure look* of objectivity *from out of itself*.

Likewise, according to this interpretation, the way of talking which suggests a proliferation of “roots” is simply not necessary. Temporality is not *yet another* structure which is needed to ground the structure of transcendence in turn. If this is the case, we should not understand Heidegger’s claim that “die Wurzel ist in der Zeit *verwurzelt*” to mean that the imagination as the common root is itself *rooted in* time so that there is *more than one* root here, but rather that imagination is “intertwined with” and indeed inextricable from time and temporality. The imagination and temporality are “deeply ingrained” in each other. The structure of transcendence is in and of itself temporal; it “already” manifests the structure of temporality.

If this is the case, Heidegger could insist on the same minor emendation of the *locus classicus* which Fichte makes, namely that the self-intuition of self-activity (“determining” in time, “temporalization”) need not be conceived of as “intuited” in any sense *prior* to the activity itself. Heidegger’s addition to this point of view—beyond Fichte’s—would be the insistence that self-activity and thus self-constitution are only possible *because* the activity in question is essentially temporal. So in the putatively problematic passages alluded to above, we can say that time is what “first makes the mind into a mind” not because the structure of temporality somehow exists independently of and thus grounds the structure of transcendence, but precisely because the “mind” here is *self-constituting through* its *self-temporalizing* activity. Being-a-self is “first” what it is in virtue of and on the basis of its self-affecting activity; there is no “mind” before or independent from the activity. This is enough, it seems to me, to make the point here. In forming the horizon, Dasein is giving itself an essentially temporal character—or, as we will see in a minute, the care-structure, which is inherently temporal—which is just what it is to be Dasein. Dasein’s transcendence has the (itself temporal) structure of “care”. This is entirely in accord with the Fichtean claim that subjectivity—being-a-self, is *sui generis and* self-constituting. A perhaps more conspicuous way of putting the Heideggerian point, though, is that Dasein’s unique mode of being as *existence* is self-constituting. But to see this we need to leave the explicit interpretation of Kant behind and turn to the metaphysics of Dasein in *Being and Time*.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ I don’t think these considerations are exactly *decisive*. As I say, this strikes me as a specific case of a quite general interpretative difficulty regarding the “early” Heidegger. I think there is a genuine persistent ambiguity here, which points to a kind of equivocation on Heidegger’s part. I am arguing here for one possible disambiguating interpretation which is coherent, fits the text to a large extent, and highlights the affinities I want to focus on. But I haven’t done complete justice to the countervailing way of talking, whereby, e.g., saying that temporality has the character of selfhood *rather than* saying that selfhood is inherently temporal somehow points to a more “originary” truth. The fact is that these locutions perhaps

2) The Metaphysics of Dasein in *Being and Time*

In this section, I want to sketch the links between Heidegger's interpretation of Kant as a fundamental ontologist and his own fundamental-ontological project in *Being and Time*.

As we have seen, the centerpiece of the Kantbook is the foregrounding of transcendental imagination as the common root and thus as the essence of transcendence.

But "imagination" seems entirely absent from *Being and Time*, and talk of "transcendence", though present, does not at all occupy there the central place it does in the Kantbook. And yet in "On the Essence of Ground", Heidegger remarks in a footnote that what he has published so far on "Being and Time" "has *no other task* than a concrete-unveiling projection of *transcendence*".⁴⁰⁰ And indeed the very title of part one, which apart from the introduction comprises all of what was published of the book, refers to the "explication of time as the *transcendental horizon* for the question of being".

point to a more *Hegelian* framework and influence which I am not pursuing here. Crudely put, the structure of temporality could be understood as an analogue of the structure of Hegelian *Geist*, in the way—very roughly now—in which the "deepest" claim that "temporality has the structure of selfhood" would be reminiscent of Hegel's claim that "substance has the structure of subjectivity", i.e. a kind of Spinozistic-monism of time, in which each Dasein is grounded in some larger structure which exceeds it, and in which it is a kind of "mere" microcosm of the larger process. I say Heidegger equivocates here, but he might actually mean something like this, at least in an inchoate form. And in fact it *could* be that these sorts of considerations are what motivate Heidegger to later forswear "fundamental ontology" in favor of a "history of being". It might be that it is precisely my way of reading the texts of this period that he later wants to eschew. It seems right that however we understand this move, or the change from the early to the late Heidegger, it involves precisely giving up on, or at least severely downplaying, the "transcendentalism" that I am identifying in the works of this period. But it is enough that it is in fact there. And in downplaying the other tendency my reading of Heidegger would be no more "violent" than Heidegger's of Kant, namely in focusing on what—by my lights—he *should* have said.

⁴⁰⁰ VWG, 162fn.

a) Understanding, Existence, and Self-Constitution

Heidegger himself starts, however briefly, to make these linkages toward the end of the Kantbook. There, he explicitly identifies the “transcendence of Dasein” with being-in-the-world and the “unity of the transcendental structure” with care. In general, Heidegger’s word for “transcendence” within the fundamental-ontological project of *Being and Time* is “disclosure” or “disclosedness” [*Erschlossenheit*]. Remember that Dasein’s distinctive “transcendence” in the Kantbook meant that Dasein transcends entities towards their being in already having an *understanding* of being [*Seinsverständnis*], even if a “pre”-ontological one. The project there of unveiling the essence of transcendence meant that we were trying to understand *Dasein*’s being such that it becomes intelligible how Dasein is *capable* of such transcendence towards the being of entities.

Dasein is an entity [which is] ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very being, that being is an issue for it...And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its being...It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its being, this being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s being* [and so] it is ontological...what we have had in mind in speaking of Dasein’s “being-ontological” is to be designated as something “pre-ontological”...[it signifies] “being in such a way that one has an understanding of being”.⁴⁰¹

The answer in the Kantbook was that Dasein is able to transcend entities toward their being in virtue of the ontological-synthetic activity of the transcendental power of imagination which forms the (temporal) horizon within which all entities could be encountered as such. It is my contention here that the structure of transcendence formed by imagination as elaborated in the Kantbook is isomorphic with the structure of pre-

⁴⁰¹ SZ 12.

ontological disclosedness formed by the *understanding* [*das Verstehen*]⁴⁰² as elaborated in *Being and Time*. As Dasein is able to transcend in virtue of the imagination in the one case, Dasein is able to have an understanding of being [*Seinsverständnis*] because the understanding [*das Verstehen*] is a fundamental existiale and thus a “basic mode of Dasein’s being”, in the other case.⁴⁰³ The function of the understanding in *Being and Time* takes the place of the function of the “power of imagination” in the Kantbook.⁴⁰⁴

The structural similarities are evident in ¶ 31 of *Being and Time*. Heidegger says that the understanding was implicit throughout the entire prior discussion of significance and the referential totality of availability [*Zuhandenheit*] which constitutes the worldhood of the world; that is, Dasein understands itself, “primarily and for the most part” in terms of its everyday dealings with available entities within the world. “In the ‘for-the-sake-of-which’, existing being-in-the-world is disclosed as such, and this disclosedness is called understanding.”⁴⁰⁵ But the main theme of the section is the elucidation of understanding in terms of Dasein’s “ability-to-be [*Seinkönnen*]”; “In understanding lies existentially the kind of being that Dasein has, as ability-to-be”⁴⁰⁶. All of Dasein’s understanding—both of itself and its world—is articulated in terms of the possibilities that the world affords and thus in terms of its possible *ways to be* (-in-the-world). Heidegger says that “understanding *is* the being of such ability-to-be” and so the understanding is a

⁴⁰² Notice that Heidegger uses a different term than Kant [*der Verstand*].

⁴⁰³ Of course, *Verstehen* as an existiale is *equiprimordial* with another existiale, namely *Befindlichkeit*, or “state of mind”, to which belong our “moods”, fundamental and otherwise. I will be focusing solely on *Verstehen* here, but I will have to say a word about *Befindlichkeit* in a moment.

⁴⁰⁴ Of course, this way of talking is predicated on my own order of presentation of the texts, not the *chronological* order. The Kantbook post-dates *Being and Time* by about two years.

⁴⁰⁵ SZ 143.

⁴⁰⁶ SZ 143.

“disclosive ability-to-be.” Indeed, Dasein *is* its possibilities—understood existentially—so Dasein *is* its “existential possibilities”.

In the *Grundprobleme*, Heidegger notes:

Being is indeed also already unveiled in the understanding of being. However, Dasein as existing *doesn't comport itself directly to being as such*, not even to its own being as such in the sense that it would understand this ontologically, but *rather Dasein is occupied with its own ability-to-be*, and this ability-to-be is understood primarily as the ability-to-be of the being that I myself am.⁴⁰⁷

That is, in any understanding of being, I am comporting myself to my own being and to the being of other entities always primarily *through* my ability-to-be, which means an understanding of the possibilities that the world affords me and thus in terms of the possible ways in which *I* “can be” in the world. Now, Heidegger says that the understanding has in itself the structure of “projection”. That is, the activity of understanding is precisely a matter of *forming* or framing those possibilities for myself. The understanding is the self-forming of Dasein’s own ability-to-be, which we can understand as the horizon within which Dasein understands its possibilities, its possible ways to be. In this forming of my ability-to-be, I can say that I am “*imagining* the possibilities” that the world, and my concrete situation within it, is now affording me, I am “picturing” the possibilities.

Heidegger had described the imagination in the Kantbook as the forming of a *Spielraum* within which entities could be encountered as the entities they are “in their own right”; and had written that “to hold oneself in advance in such a play-space, *to form it originally*, is none other than the transcendence which marks all finite comportment to beings”. This language is carried over in the discussion of the projecting understanding.

⁴⁰⁷ GP 456-457.

“Projection is the existential constitution of the being of the *play-space* of factual ability-to-be”. In *Being and Time*, all comportment to entities within the world presupposes that the understanding forms its ability-to-be within the “imaginative” play-space in which the possibilities for being that the world affords show themselves.

Because the understanding...is not just a type of knowing, but on the contrary is primarily a *basic moment of existing in general*, the explicit implementation [Vollzug] of projecting...must necessarily be *construction*.⁴⁰⁸

But, of course, this projection of possibilities is always, Heidegger says, “*thrown*”; that is, the imagining of possibilities formed in understanding one’s ability-to-be is never arbitrary, haphazard or “free-floating”, but rather precisely arises out of and is sensitive to the constraints of the factual situation. The understanding *is* a “thrown projecting”. This exactly mirrors the structure of transcendental imagination as simultaneously spontaneous and receptive. In projecting possibilities onto the world, i.e. in “constructing” or creating possibilities for myself, I am also making myself beholden to the possibilities that *the world* actually affords in this situation. “Projection, in throwing, throws before itself the possibility as possibility, and *lets it be as such*.”⁴⁰⁹ Understanding is an imagining or constructing of possibilities which are “delivered over to” or acquiescent to the world itself and the “actual” possibilities that it affords.

Lastly, understanding in its projective character, Heidegger says, “existentially constitutes [*macht aus*]” Dasein’s “sight [*Sicht*]”.⁴¹⁰ He is referring here to the cluster of concepts which had been elaborated in the discussion of the worldhood of the world and of being-with. Available [*zuhanden*] entities within the world—equipment—are objects

⁴⁰⁸ KPM 232-233.

⁴⁰⁹ SZ 145, my emphasis.

⁴¹⁰ SZ 146.

of Dasein's "concern [*Besorgen*]", and our dealings with such objects "has its own kind of sight" which Heidegger calls "circumspection [*Umsicht*]". Likewise, our comportments to other "Daseins"—other human beings—are defined by our "solicitude [*Fürsorge*]", which is in turn guided by a "kind of sight" which Heidegger calls "considerateness and forbearance [*Rücksicht und Nachsicht*]".⁴¹¹ These are all ways in which other entities, both items of equipment and other human beings, are made encounterable *as* the particular type of entities they are. Heidegger says that "all sight is [in its existential signification] grounded primarily in understanding"; and:

In giving an existential signification to 'sight', we have merely drawn upon the peculiar feature of seeing, that it lets entities which are accessible to it to be encountered unconcealedly in themselves...we may formalize sight and seeing enough to obtain thereby a universal term for characterizing *every access to entities and to being*, as access in general.⁴¹²

Again, this is precisely the function of imagination as the essence of transcendence as described in the Kantbook. The structure of transcendence, as "self-orienting turning-toward which lets stand-in-opposition", was intended precisely to make intelligible our *access* [*Zugang*] in general to objects qua objects. The "existential kind of sight" which belongs to understanding has an inherent affinity to the "looks" which belong to the power of imagination. They are both that on the basis of which Dasein has "access" to other entities, indeed to the *being* of other entities. Comporting oneself to other entities "understandingly" is a matter of either circumpective concern or considerate (or forbearing) solicitude. These forms of sight make possible Dasein's first "seeing"—encountering as such—available entities and other human beings as such; just as the imagination's "pure looks" were conceived of as a sketching-out of the horizon of the

⁴¹¹ SZ 123.

⁴¹² SZ 147, my italics.

range of possible empirical looks. In a telling passage in the Kantbook which makes these affinities completely clear, Heidegger writes,

The transcendental power of imagination *projects, forming in advance the totality of possibilities* in terms of which it “looks out” [*“hinaussieht”*], in order thereby to hold before itself the horizon within which the knowing self, and not only this, acts.⁴¹³

The connection between the role of transcendental imagination in the Kantbook and the role of understanding in *Being and Time*, then, allows us to see how the crucial claim regarding self-constitution is expressed in the latter text. “Existence” is the name Heidegger gives in *Being and Time* for Dasein’s sui generis mode of being. So in *understanding* itself now in terms of its ability-to-be, Dasein constitutes itself as “existing”. “The question of existence never gets straightened out *except through existing itself*”⁴¹⁴, that is, in Dasein’s forming of an understanding of itself in terms of the possible ways for it to be in the world. We can say that Dasein’s existence is self-constituting, because Dasein *is* its possibilities which are formed within its *understanding* of its own ability-to-be. Thus Dasein precisely determines itself, its own existence, in the forming of the possible ways in which it can be. Heidegger says, “in determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very being, it somehow understands.”⁴¹⁵ If Heidegger says that “by ‘existentiality’ we understand the constitution of the being [*Seinsverfassung*] of entities that exist” and that “the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself”, this means that in existing, Dasein “realizes” its own existentiality; and since

⁴¹³ KPM 154-155, my italics.

⁴¹⁴ SZ 12.

⁴¹⁵ SZ 43.

existentiality is the constitution of its being, Dasein constitutes its own being. Dasein's existence is self-constituting.

I will return in a moment to a comparison of Heidegger's sense of the self-constitution of Dasein with Fichte's, but I want to re-iterate here that for Heidegger, the structure of understanding which gives Dasein's existence its self-constituting character is "*thrown projecting*". This means that understanding is as "receptive" as it is "spontaneous". Furthermore, our understanding is for Heidegger equiprimordial with our "state-of-mind [*Befindlichkeit*]", that is, with our "moods"; so both are *co-constitutive* of Dasein's mode being. Heidegger says that a "state-of-mind always has its understanding... understanding always has its mood."⁴¹⁶ There are two points to be made here. Firstly, though it's true that Heidegger's account of state-of-mind emphasizes much more our "receptivity"—we characteristically simply "find ourselves" with or to be in a certain mood—and moods thus epitomize in a way our "facticity", the fact that we are "delivered over" to being and thrown into existence, Heidegger doesn't think that even our moods exactly "determine" us in any way. Though we necessarily simply find ourselves in a mood, this means merely that we are never "moodless", not that we have *no* control over our moods.⁴¹⁷ Ostensibly, even if any change in mood is always only to, as Heidegger says, a "counter-mood", the extent to which we have control over our moods will accrue to the fact that they are always accompanied by an understanding. Secondly, even if Dasein is constituted partially by its state-of-mind—meaning that I cannot "choose to be moodless"—even if, that is, the fact that Dasein is always "saddled" with a mood and *in this regard* is "wholly thrown", this fact does not threaten the claim that because Dasein

⁴¹⁶ SZ 142.

⁴¹⁷ See the discussion at SZ 136.

is partially constituted by its understanding, the “spontaneity” of Dasein’s self-constituting “activity” is absolutely essential. The main point is after all that the essence of Dasein’s transcendence is that it is both spontaneous and receptive at the same time and in the same respect.⁴¹⁸

b) Selfhood and Care

Heidegger is entirely explicit in the Kantbook that what he and Kant share is a fundamental ontology whose central concern is an account of the “ontological constitution of the subjectivity of the subject”, and thus an ontological interpretation of selfhood and of being-a-self. We have seen that within *Being and Time*, the former two terms—‘subjectivity’ and ‘the subject’—are exclusively understood within the context of a traditional ontological picture which construes the subject as a kind of thing-like substance, and thus avoided. And the latter two terms—‘selfhood’ and ‘being-a-self’—do not, at first reading, *seem* to hold the central place and to play the essential structural role that they do in the Kantbook. But they are absolutely *pervasive* throughout *Being*

⁴¹⁸ These remarks are à propos of some recent discussions of Heidegger’s debate with Cassirer at Davos. As Peter Gordon, for instance, makes clear in his illuminating book *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Harvard, 2010), one of the main issues, if not *the* issue, at stake in this polemical exchange is precisely the issue of spontaneity and receptivity. It’s true that, as Gordon points out, and as Carman has emphasized in his “Heidegger’s Anti-Neo-Kantianism” [in *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 41, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 131-142], Heidegger is very much interested in *resisting* the neo-Kantian tendency to downplay or dismiss the role of receptivity in Kant in favor of a thorough-going spontaneity. I agree—this is why Heidegger emphasizes the *acquiescence* of transcendence the way he does—but I don’t think we should let this polemical context allow us to throw the baby out with the bath-water, as it were. Heidegger is not simply taking the contrary view, or making the “opposite” mistake, i.e. attributing all of Dasein’s constitution to receptivity rather than spontaneity. It is important to maintain the sense in which Dasein’s “activity” is “spontaneous” not least in order to preserve the absolutely fundamental ontological asymmetry between Dasein’s mode of being and the mode of being of “things”.

and Time. In this section I will indicate briefly this pervasiveness and thus how we can understand “selfhood” as a core concept within the latter text.

Unfortunately, as we have seen already, the section which promises to contain an explicit discussion and positive characterization of selfhood, ¶64, is mostly taken up with the negative critique of Kant; we are told that and why Kant “has by no means achieved an ontological interpretation of selfhood”. But the point of this section is of course not at all to thereby abandon or dismiss the possibility of such an “ontological interpretation of selfhood”, but precisely to indicate how it is to be properly understood. Since “the self belongs to the essential determinations of Dasein, while Dasein’s ‘essence’ lies in existence, then I-hood and selfhood must be conceived *existentially*”; and the task then becomes to “clarify the existentiality of the self”.⁴¹⁹

First and foremost, this means understanding the selfhood of Dasein as a “being-in-the-world”. Of course, the thoroughly anti-Cartesian import of this claim that is the focus of most interpretations—that Dasein is not an isolated thinking thing in need of reconstructing its relationship to an external world—is completely apparent and appropriate. But we are in a position now to see this claim through the lens of Heidegger’s *idealist appropriation* of Kant. Being-in-the-world also means being among other entities whose mode of being is not mine, whose being I did not create, yet whose being I already understand. It thus signals the finitude and dependence of being-a-self, and its essentially acquiescent nature. This means that “the world belongs *to being-a-self* as being-in-the-world”⁴²⁰. The indispensable point here is: *Dasein’s being-in-the-world means being-a-self-in-the-world*. “In saying I, I have in view the entity which in each

⁴¹⁹ SZ 318.

⁴²⁰ SZ 146, my italics: “Welt gehört zu seinem Selbstsein als In-der-Welt-sein”.

case I am *as* an I-am-in-the-world...In saying I, Dasein *expresses itself* as being-in-the-world.”⁴²¹

This means that Dasein’s understanding has what we can call a *hermeneutic-holistic* structure. Any understanding—and thus interpretation—of the world is *at the same time* an understanding and interpretation of the self—more specifically, possible ways of being-a-self.⁴²² Likewise, any self-interpretation includes at the same time an interpretation of the world in terms of the possibilities that it affords. As Heidegger says in the *Grundprobleme*, “[w]orld-understanding as Dasein-understanding is self-understanding. Self and world belong together in the one entity, in Dasein”.⁴²³ That Dasein is a being-in-the-world means that “the phenomenon of the world *co*-determines the constitution of the being of the I”⁴²⁴; this is already understood in conceiving of Dasein’s projective understanding as acquiescent to the world, as thrown. But the self is *always there too* in any interpretation: because the “interpretation of self belongs to Dasein’s being.”⁴²⁵ While it is true that the “everyday” interpretation of the self has a tendency to understand itself wholly in terms of the world with which it is concerned, so that in “the ‘natural’ ontical way of talking of the I, the phenomenal content of the Dasein

⁴²¹ SZ 321.

⁴²² This “hermeneutic holism”—that every self-interpretation or self-conception involves an interpretation or conception of the world and vice-versa—must sound a distinctly *Hegelian* note; and indeed, this represents another of the many ways in which Heidegger’s thought can be seen as drawing from the post-Kantian Idealist tradition *in general*. As already indicated (in the discussion of the relationship between subjectivity and temporality), there are also indications of Hegelian moments in this period which I am not exploring here. Again, a fuller treatment of my topic would require including Hegel in the story as well.

⁴²³ GP 422; see also 250: “World-understanding [*Weltverstehen*] is at the same time an understanding-of-itself by Dasein [*ein Sich-selbst-verstehen des Daseins*]”

⁴²⁴ SZ 321.

⁴²⁵ SZ 312.

which is meant by [saying] I gets overlooked...this gives *no justification for the ontological interpretation of the I to join in on the oversight*”⁴²⁶.

Now, of course much of the *Daseinsanalytik* in *Being and Time* is given over to the claim that Dasein’s being-in-the-world has the (temporal) structure of what Heidegger calls “care”. Simply put, this claim is that Dasein’s (projective) understanding of being—both its own and that of other entities—is grounded in the ways in which the world *matters* to it. But the world matters to Dasein not least because Dasein’s *own being*—that is, being-a-self—matters to it; its own being is always an issue for it. Again, Heidegger says that “care expresses itself with ‘I’”; and that “selfhood is to be discerned existentially only in one’s authentic ability-to-be-a-self [*Selbstseinkönnen*]*—that is to say, in the authenticity of Dasein’s being as care.*”⁴²⁷ The structure of care *is* the structure of the ability-to-be-a-self. “Care already *contains* [*birgt...in sich*] the phenomena of selfhood”⁴²⁸; and “when fully conceived, the structure of care *comprises* [*schließt...ein*] the phenomenon of selfhood”⁴²⁹.

“*In sich bergen*” is a very interesting locution here, because beyond the simple meaning of “contains”, it can also mean—and it seems eminently plausible that Heidegger wants to evoke all of these meanings at once—“to protect” or “to rescue”—“to provide harbor in itself”—implying that conceiving of Dasein’s being as care is a way to *recover* being-a-self from the traditional ontological conception of it as a thing-like substance. But it also implies a “hiding away”; as if (even the proper) conception of

⁴²⁶ SZ 322.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., my italics.

⁴²⁸ SZ 318, my italics.

⁴²⁹ SZ 323, my italics.

Dasein's being *as care* also serves to obscure or conceal the fact that Dasein's being *is also*, after all, a being-a-self. To say that a "*fully conceived*" care-structure amounts to the structure of Dasein's being-a-self is to say that the care-structure as Heidegger elucidates it *is as such elliptical*. Heidegger defines the care-structure as follows:

The formally existential totality of Dasein's ontological structural whole must therefore be contained in the following structure: the being of Dasein means already-ahead-of-itself-being-in-(the-world) as being-among (entities encountered within the world). This being satisfies the meaning of the term *care*, which is used purely ontologico-existentially.⁴³⁰

"Fully conceived", then, this structure reads "being-*a-self*-(which-is)-already-ahead-of-itself etc." The phenomenon of selfhood is at were hidden away by the structure as Heidegger characteristically elucidates it. It is true, as Heidegger says, that "care does not need *a foundation* [*Fundierung*] in a self"; but this is just because properly and fully construed, being-a-self *is* care, or "has the structure of care".

Selfhood [*Selbstheit*], and being-a-self [*Selbstsein*], then, is a pervasive and fundamental concept within the metaphysics of Dasein in *Being and Time* as a whole. Heidegger's *existential* "theory of selfhood" can be outlined in the following manner. Heidegger says that "Dasein's selfhood [is] defined *formally* as a *way of existing*".⁴³¹ There are two formal, *a priori* aspects or features of Dasein's selfhood. The first is "existentiality", which we have already discussed. Dasein is the entity for whom being (including its own) is an issue, and as such, it is never something merely occurrent [*vorhanden*], but fundamentally characterized by "possible ways for it to be". The second feature—mineness [*Jemeinigkeit*—is closely intertwined with the first. Heidegger says the being of Dasein is "in each case mine". The being which is at issue in

⁴³⁰ SZ 192.

⁴³¹ SZ 267, first italics mine.

the ability-to-be-a-self is in each case Dasein's own being, and the possible ways of existing are in each case Dasein's own. In existing, I am delivered over to *my* being, *my* ability-to-be, and my understanding of the latter thus defines *my* possibilities and *my* possible ways to be.

These features define the formal a priori structure of Dasein's existence, the "existentiality of the self". Heidegger calls this the structure, admittedly potentially confusingly, the "authentic self" [*das eigentliche Selbst*], and it is this sense of selfhood which is "discerned in one's authentic ability-to-be-a-self [*eigentliches Selbstseinkönnen*]". But existence "never gets straightened out except through existing itself", so in fact there are two fundamental possible *existentiell* ways of existing, and thus of being-a-self, i.e. either authentically or inauthentically.⁴³² "As modes of being, authenticity and inauthenticity...are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness".⁴³³ We can say: it is the fact that Dasein is formally and a priori an "authentic self", that is, is existentially defined by mineness—the ability-to-be-a-self—that grounds the two possible *existentiell*, factual ways of being-a-self—namely authentic being-a-self and inauthentic being-a-self.

Now, of course, firstly and for the most part, Dasein in its everydayness exists as an inauthentic self. "The question of the 'who' of Dasein has been answered with the expression 'self'...[but] for the most part *I myself* am not the 'who' of Dasein, but rather the they-self [*das Man-selbst*]".⁴³⁴ This is to say that in my everyday comportment to available entities with which I am concerned and to other Dasein with whom I am

⁴³² SZ 12: "The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads *along this way* we call 'existentiell'."

⁴³³ SZ 43.

⁴³⁴ SZ 267.

“solicitous”—considerate or forbearing—according to anonymous public and culturally inherited norms and practices, I am simply acting “as one acts” under the circumstances; I am understanding the possibilities that the world affords in a way which is “indifferent” to my own particular and individualized ability-to-be . Heidegger says here that Dasein has an “undifferentiated character”. The possibilities I am sensitive to in these contexts are simply the possibilities available to “anyone” under these circumstances. In so comporting myself, Heidegger says that I am “absorbed” in the world and in what I am doing. In such everyday concerned comportment, Dasein “flees in the face of itself into the ‘they’”. In such cases, the self—‘I myself’, the authentic self—is, Heidegger says, either “lost” or “forgotten”. The latter expression is perhaps the more perspicacious; I am simply neglecting or *not paying attention* to my self and my own particularized ability-to-be in such contexts. But neither expression should be understood to mean that the self has “gone out of existence”.⁴³⁵ What inauthentic Dasein has “lost” is its authentic-ability-to-be-itself, that is, of understanding itself according to its “ownmost” possibilities. *Das Man-Selbst* is not any kind of strange collective entity which replaces the authentic self in everyday comportment, but rather *the way* in which the (authentic) self, or the self authentically understood, understands itself in everyday comportment. It is a way of comporting which is a “fleeing into” or “falling back on” the average possibilities that the world affords according to public and inherited norms, in which the self says ‘I’ “fugitively”.

Heidegger says:

⁴³⁵ In passing, these remarks show how misleading Dreyfus’ latest way of talking about “expert or absorbed coping” is, insofar as his view is supposed to still be an expression of a Heideggerian view. By the “latest way of talking” I mean, for instance, his 2005 APA Pacific Division Presidential Address and the subsequent exchange with McDowell published in *Inquiry* Vol. 50, No. 4. See also fn. 460 below.

It has been shown that proximally and for the most part Dasein is not itself but is lost in the they-self, which is *an existentiell modification of the authentic self* [*des eigentlichen Selbst*].⁴³⁶

And:

Authentic being-a-self [*das eigentliche Selbstsein*] takes the definite form of *an existentiell modification of das Man*.⁴³⁷

While most commentators on *Being and Time* are willing to assert that Heidegger is simply contradicting himself here⁴³⁸, we can see that there is no contradiction if we keep in mind the distinction between the formal *existential* structure of Dasein's mineness—the fact that Dasein's being is fundamentally characterized by its ability-to-be-a-self—and the factual *existentiell* possibilities it grounds—the possibility of both authentically being-a-self and of inauthentically being-a-self (or a “they-self”). That the existential structure of Dasein's understanding as ability-to-be-a-self grounds the possibility of inauthentically being a they-self means that the latter is an existentiell modification—a *mode* of being—of the former. And because Dasein exists—understands itself—for the most part as a they-self, authentically being-a-self will always be an existentiell modification of such inauthentically-being-a-self. None of which of course threatens the status of das Man as itself an *existential*.

⁴³⁶ SZ 317, my italics.

⁴³⁷ SZ 267, my italics.

⁴³⁸ The idea that there is a contradiction here is in evidence in a series of articles in *Inquiry* debating Dreyfus' claim that *das Man* is the source of all intelligibility for Heidegger, primarily between Frederick Olafson, who attacks Dreyfus' reading on a number of counts, and Taylor Carman, who is largely defending Dreyfus here. See Olafson, “Heidegger à la Wittgenstein or ‘Coping’ with Professor Dreyfus” in *Inquiry*, 37, 45-64; Carman, “On Being Social: a Reply to Olafson” 37, 203-23; Olafson, “Individualism, Subjectivity, and Presence: a Response to Taylor Carman” 37, 331-7. Dreyfus himself later contributes to this debate with “Interpreting Heidegger on *Das Man*”, 38, 423-30. Dreyfus in particular explicitly acknowledges a contradiction and claims then that “we must simply choose” one and discard the other. I discuss these issues in depth in an unpublished article “Intelligibility, Authenticity & Selfhood”.

This undifferentiated character of Dasein's everydayness is not nothing, but a positive phenomenal characteristic of this entity. Out of this kind of being [into being-a-self-authentically]—and back into it again—is all existing, such as it is.⁴³⁹

What is important here, and what is hopefully by now clear, is that Dasein's existing is *always* a matter of *being-a-self*, of one kind or another.

c) Care and the Unity of “Reason”

There is one final feature of Heidegger's conception of selfhood which is shared with Fichte's idealist conception of subjectivity. We have seen how Fichte thought that displaying the structure of the self-constituting character of the I was already enough to show how theoretical and practical subjectivity—and “reason” in its theoretical and practical employments—are essentially unified. Heidegger too thinks that his analysis of the structure of Dasein's existence as care demonstrates the unity between theoretical and practical comportment.

That addressing the unity of theoretical and practical conceptions of subjectivity is a concern of Heidegger's is evident in his interpretation of Kant. We have seen that Heidegger “risked” an interpretation in which the transcendental power of imagination is the origin not only theoretical reason but also practical reason. Furthermore, in a somewhat cryptic marginal note in the Kantbook, Heidegger remarks that the third *Critique*, whose importance for this issue we have already discussed (particularly the claim regarding beauty as the symbol of morality in §59), bolsters his interpretation. He writes that in forming his interpretation of Kant initially, he had considered and consulted

⁴³⁹ SZ 43.

the third *Critique* only “far enough to be able to see that it is not contradicted”; but that, after presumably considering it further, he finds in §59 of that work “the *highest confirmation* of the interpretation”.⁴⁴⁰ In discussing precisely this section in the first chapter, I showed how it represents the last and best attempt Kant makes at solving the problem of the unity of reason. There, the “freedom of the imagination” was seen as a way of seeing the “supersensible that grounds nature” as related to the “supersensible that grounds (practical) freedom”, so that what I called the spontaneity of aesthetic freedom gave us a way to see the spontaneity involved in theoretical reason as *analogous* to the spontaneity involved in practical reason. This made some headway in addressing the most intractable sense of the unity of reason for Kant, namely in providing a unified account of ourselves as *both* knowers and doers. But for reasons I gave there, the connection could not go beyond that of an analogy, because even though reason in all its employments is understood as a *self-activity*, Kant remained barred from equating the spontaneity involved in theoretical knowledge with the spontaneity of practical freedom. In seeing the structures of both theoretical reason and of practical reason as rooted in the structure of transcendental power of imagination as spontaneous receptivity and receptive spontaneity, Heidegger saw a way through this problem.

Indeed, in the *Grundprobleme*, Heidegger identifies the failure to solve the problem of the unity of reason, to “determine originally the unity of the theoretical and the practical I”, as the “essential flaw in the problem of the I in Kant”.⁴⁴¹ Heidegger here discusses Kant’s dual conception of the I as *personalitas transcendentalis*—the theoretical I—and as *personalitas moralis*—the practical I—and, admitting that the latter at least receives

⁴⁴⁰ Included as appendix I in newer editions. KPM 250, my italics.

⁴⁴¹ GP 207.

some “ontological determination” as an end in itself, says that the “whole of the entity that we ourselves are [*das Ganze des Seienden, das wir selbst sind*]...and the mode of being of [its] original wholeness, remains ontologically in the dark.”⁴⁴²

It is precisely the goal of Heidegger’s metaphysics of Dasein, as it was for Fichte, to show the “wholeness and unity” in the mode of being of the entity that we ourselves are.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarks that

‘Theory’ and ‘Practice’ are possibilities for being [*Seinsmöglichkeiten*] of an entity whose being must be defined as “care”.

Care, as an original structural whole, lies existentially a priori “before”—and this means always already “in”—every factual “comportment” and “situation” of Dasein. So this phenomenon by no means expresses a priority of “practical” comportment over the theoretical.⁴⁴³

It is interesting here that Heidegger denies holding any kind of doctrine of the “primacy of the practical”, particularly given the emphasis in *Being and Time* itself on comportment to *available* entities over “knowing” the world *as occurrent*; indeed “knowing the world” is described as a “founded” mode of being-in-the-world, whereas practical comportment is not. The *Grundprobleme* is perhaps more clear about why this is. Both *theoretical comportments* toward the world—e.g. in all attempts to grasp entities within the world conceptually, in all attempts at explanation and clarification, in all attempts, in short, to *know* the world in the ordinary cognitive sense—and “*practical-technical*” *comportments*—e.g. in all concernful everyday dealings with available “equipment”—are grounded in the disclosive activity of *understanding* as thrown projection.

⁴⁴² GP 208.

⁴⁴³ SZ 19.

In all comportment toward entities—whether it is specifically cognitive, which is most frequently called theoretical, or whether it is practical-technical—an understanding of being [*Verständnis von Sein*] is involved... Thus what is required is to find a sufficiently original concept of understanding [*Verstehen*] from which alone not only all modes of cognition but every comportment which relates itself to entities sightfully and circumspectively [*sichtig-umsichtig*] can be conceived in a fundamental way.⁴⁴⁴

The activity of understanding as thrown projecting, like the transcendental power of imagination in the Kant-interpretation, in making possible all pre-ontological understanding of the being of entities, and thus all disclosive access to entities as such, is just this “sufficiently original concept of understanding”. It is on the basis of this self-forming of the horizon of transcendence that Dasein comports itself to any entity as such, indeed to the being of any entity, *either* as available or occurrent. “Insofar as the understanding is a basic determination of existence, it is as such the condition of the possibility for all comportment, not only practical but also cognitive”.⁴⁴⁵

So the unity and wholeness of Dasein, of its possibilities to be both a knower and a doer, is grounded in the structure of its disclosive thrown-projecting activity of understanding, and thus in *care*. This is not to assign a *priority* to “the practical”; both are equally possibilities for care, on the same level, as it were. Despite the emphasis in *Being and Time* on the ways in which theoretical attitudes—comporting to entities as occurrent—sometimes result from “breakdowns” in one’s everyday comportment to those entities as available, the occurrentness of entities which makes such attitudes possible is not exclusively grounded in their “prior” availability. These represent two possible ways of disclosing entities, and thus represent two possible *ways for Dasein to be*, i.e. a “knower” or a “doer”. Both possibilities are grounded in care, so the possibility of

⁴⁴⁴ GP 390.

⁴⁴⁵ GP 392.

“knowing the world” is something that can *matter* to Dasein as well as the possibility of everyday unreflective dealings with it.

3) Selfhood and *Selbständigkeit*: Heidegger's Idealism

This chapter has so far been devoted to displaying the affinities between Heidegger's conception of selfhood and Fichte's conception of subjectivity. These affinities amount to Heidegger's acceptance of the first constellation of claims that constituted Fichte's idealism, that is, his "transcendentalism". Heidegger maintains, along with Fichte, that human subjectivity is an ontologically *sui generis* mode of being distinguished through its being self-constituting. Additionally, the structure of subjectivity yields a unity "of the whole being", that is, a unity which makes sense of both its theoretical and practical capacities. But Heidegger also says of course that his interpretation of Kant, and *a fortiori* his understanding of his own fundamental-ontological project, "moves in the opposite direction from German Idealism". In this final section I want to elucidate this claim. In particular, I want to show how and why Heidegger rejects the substance of Fichte's claims regarding the self-sufficiency of reason and of subjectivity. But in my discussion of Fichte, I focused in fact on the various *ambiguities* in the latter's claims about the consequences of "transcendentalism", which stood as obstacles to any interpretation of what exactly is supposed to be meant by the further idealist claims regarding self-sufficiency. So, put more precisely, I will argue that Heidegger's transcendentalism equips us with crucial distinctions which allow us to disambiguate these claims, and thus show that the strong interpretations of the idealist claims regarding self-sufficiency cannot possibly be true, or do not follow from the transcendentalist claims in the way Fichte seems to think they do.

I identified the following ambiguities in Fichte's idealism. The first had to do with the sense of mind-dependence which was supposed to follow from the fact of the "transcendental circle". The second regarded what Fichte meant by intellectual intuition, that is, whether it was an activity which "always happens anyway" in consciousness, or whether it was a special accomplishment of the (idealist) philosopher. This issue is further complicated by the question whether we can then understand the non-idealist philosopher as capable of spontaneity and thus as free, at all. Heidegger's "transcendentalism" yields fundamental distinctions which allow a resolution of these ambiguities and thus a clarification of what really follows from the transcendentalist claim. These distinctions are 1) the ontological difference itself, in particular the distinction between the ontological and the ontic; and 2) the distinction between authentic and inauthentic understandings of being. I will show how these distinctions map onto, disambiguate, and then allow us to evaluate, Fichte's claims about self-sufficiency.

a) The Meaning of the "Transcendental Circle" Revisited

The claim about the transcendental circle, itself a consequence of the ontological asymmetry between persons and things, was formulated by Fichte as the claim that everything is only "for the I"; he says that "all that is not-I is *for the I* only". I pointed out that in Fichte's sense of intellectual intuition, as distinguished from Kant's, what was *created* in the intuition was just this "for the I" feature of experience. So intellectual intuition is a self-creative activity only in the sense that in this activity, the I creates its *being-for-itself*, its original self-relating, which is just what its being consists in. I said

that this way of putting things *could* allow us a particular formulation of ontological asymmetry which reinforced a natural “realism” about the not-I: while the being of the I is unique in that the “I *is only* for itself”—that is, outside of a particular relation to an I, namely, to itself, there is no I at all, or at least not this particular I—“not-I’s” are precisely the “sorts of things” that can exist anyway outside of any relation to any I whatsoever. But Fichte then seems to make much stronger claims about the *dependence* of not-I’s on the I on the sole basis of the transcendental circle.

There is a version of this circle which certainly holds for Heidegger as well. “All that is not-I is for the I only” would mean that Dasein comports itself to all other entities—entities that are not this particular Dasein—only through its own pre-ontological *understanding of the being* of those entities, and a fortiori its understanding of its own being. This can be seen as a consequence of ontological asymmetry, because Dasein is the only kind of entity that has such an understanding of being at all. Dasein in its transcending, existential activity creates this understanding of being, and because this understanding of being is always articulated in terms of Dasein’s own ability-to-be and thus Dasein’s possibilities and possible ways to be, possibilities in which Dasein’s own being as existence consists, Dasein then is self-creating in *this* sense. The proper Heideggerian way to put Fichte’s point about “intellectual intuition” as an original self-relating and thus self-intuiting activity would then be: Dasein’s self-forming transcending activity—conceived as either the activity of “imagination” or “understanding”—is *ontologically but not ontically creative* [*schöpferisch*].⁴⁴⁶ Dasein creates the *horizon* of all ontological understanding of being within which all comportment towards entities is

⁴⁴⁶ See KPM § 25.

made possible, but thereby of course creates neither the entities themselves nor the being of the entities—only an *understanding of the being* of entities. Dasein does not create the *being* of entities in the sense that it does not create or control the facts regarding “that and what entities are”, but rather creates the possibility of *comprehending* those facts as facts, of *understanding* “that and what entities are”, and thus creates the possibility of comporting itself to those entities which also exist in their own right.

Though they are not, I think, identical, we can see Heidegger’s famous *hermeneutic* circle as closely joined with this sense of the *transcendental* circle. We can say that the “hermeneutic situation” Heidegger describes—whereby the idea of existence and of being in general must be “presupposed”, and whereby one must begin with the “everyday” and “inauthentic” and move toward the “authentic” and back again—is engendered by the “transcendental situation”. Dasein finds itself in a *hermeneutic* circle on the basis of being in a *transcendental* circle.

Because it is primordially constituted by care, any Dasein is already ahead of itself. As being, it has in every case already projected itself upon definite possibilities of its existence; and in such existentiell projections it has, in a pre-ontological manner, also projected something like existence and being.⁴⁴⁷

The “circularity charge”—which leads to an admission of the hermeneutic circle—Heidegger says, “comes from a kind of being that belongs to Dasein”, which is to say that Dasein has a “*circular being* [*zirkelhaftes Sein*]”.⁴⁴⁸ Dasein’s existence is always within the transcendental circle; so Dasein must acknowledge the hermeneutic circle *because its own being* involves a transcendental circle, a “projection of existence and being”.

⁴⁴⁷ SZ 315.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

But Heidegger's way of describing the situation of the transcendental circle avoids the ambiguities regarding the subsequent senses in which entities are "dependent" on Dasein in which Fichte was embroiled, and thus Heidegger improves on Fichte's account. Dasein's self-forming, self-intuiting activity is ontologically but not ontically creative, because it is also essentially *acquiescent* and thus *finite*. Its projecting activity—which is ontologically creative—is always at the same time thrown. Heidegger calls this Dasein's "transcendental neediness [*transzendente Bedürftigkeit*]" which represents "the innermost finitude that sustains Dasein".⁴⁴⁹ But of course, in actuality there is a kind of mutual dependence here. While Dasein's projective understanding of being is dependent on entities, the *being* of the entities, which is revealed only in that understanding, is *in some sense*—to be specified in a moment—dependent on Dasein. This way of putting the claim—that Dasein's thrown-projective understanding is ontologically but not ontically creative—helps us understand the *locus classicus* of Heidegger's idealism:

Indeed only as long as Dasein *is*, that is, the ontical possibility of the understanding of being is, 'is there' being. If Dasein doesn't exist, then 'independence' 'is' not either, nor 'is' the 'in-itself'. Such a thing is then neither understandable nor not understandable. Then also intraworldly entities neither are discoverable, nor can they lie in hiddenness. Then it can be said neither that entities are, nor that they are not. Nevertheless, it can now be said—as long as the understanding of being, and thereby the understanding of occurrentness are—that then entities will continue to be.

As we have indicated, being—but not entities—are dependent on the understanding of being...⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ KPM 236.

⁴⁵⁰ SZ 212. The translation is a slight modification of William Blattner's in his article "Is Heidegger a Kantian Idealist?" in *Inquiry*, 37, 185-201. I take my conclusions to be roughly in agreement with his. Though what he calls the "strong reading" of the passage, which he there defends, is closer to what I called the weak reading of mind-dependence in the discussion of Fichte, because what I called the weak reading was not just supposed to be trivially true—or true by a re-definition of being, as Blattner puts it—but based rather on, and supportive of, the substantial claims regarding ontological asymmetry and self-constitution that are wrapped up in the claims about the "transcendental circle" itself.

Entities are not dependent on Dasein's understanding of being, because that understanding is essentially acquiescent, and thus rather dependent on entities. But the being of entities *is* dependent on Dasein's understanding of being in the sense that the understanding of being provides the “ontological *framework*”—in Blattner's words—for every question regarding the being of entities. In the absence of Dasein, and thus in the absence of the “ontical possibility of the *understanding* of being”, any question regarding the being of entities is simply lacking in significance, as Blattner says.

This looks on the surface very similar to the reasons that motivated Fichte to call the thing-in-itself—or pure “being-in-itself”—“self-contradictory” and a “non-thought”. Such a characterization and dismissal of the thing-in-itself was meant to be a direct consequence of the circle. This dismissal by itself made the very idea of entities—“not-I's”—existing independently of a relation to an I immediately suspect. But from the Heideggerian perspective I have been developing—and the revised version of the circle I have ascribed to it—we needn't say this at all. We needn't consider the very idea of the thing-in-itself to be self-contradictory. To see why not, we need to briefly take a look at how Heidegger treats the idea of the thing-in-itself in the Kantbook.

Dasein is “within the circle” in virtue of its self-forming of the horizon of transcendence, and it is within this horizon that Dasein has “access to”, can encounter, objects as such, i.e. entities which can “stand-in-opposition” and which thus exist anyway and in their own right. The self-forming of the horizon is ontologically creative but acquiescent and thus an essentially “finite knowing”. This kind of self-intuiting activity is fundamentally distinguished from any *intuitus originarius*—“intellectual intuition” in Kant's original sense—which is an “infinite” or “absolute” knowing. For the latter—

which we can say, by contrast, is “ontically creative”—the entity is not an object [*Gegenstand*] at all, but rather, as Heidegger says in the Kantbook, an “originated entity” [*Ent-stand*].

Infinite knowing is an intuition that as such lets the being itself be originated (or lets the being itself come into being) [*entstehen läßt*]. Absolute knowing itself makes manifest the entity in letting-come-to-be, and possesses it in every case “only” as that which is originated in the letting-be-originated, i.e. as an originated entity...it is the entity as the entity-in-itself, *which means, not as an object*.⁴⁵¹

Heidegger makes a distinction between the entity-“in-itself” [*das Seiende “an-sich”*] and the entity itself [*das Seiende selbst*]. Both appearance and “thing-in-itself” are characterizations of the same entity—the “entity itself”.

Appearances are not merely illusions, but rather the entity itself. This entity, again, is not something different than the thing-in-itself, but rather even this [thing-in-itself] is an entity. The entity itself can be manifest without the entity “in-itself”—as an originated entity—being cognized. The double characterization of the entity as “thing-in-itself” and as “appearance” corresponds to the twofold manner according to which the entity can stand in relation to an infinite and a finite knowing: the entity in being-originated [*Entstand*] and the same entity as object [*Gegenstand*].⁴⁵²

The thing-in-itself—according to Heidegger’s reading of Kant—is not then self-contradictory, but simply the entity itself “for” an infinite knower; it is the same entity which, “for us” as finite knowers, is an *object*. The thing-in-itself is only “behind the appearances” in the sense that “finite knowledge as finite necessarily conceals at the same time, and it conceals in advance so that the “thing-in-itself” is not only imperfectly accessible, but is absolutely inaccessible to such knowledge by its very essence.”⁴⁵³ We can call the thing-in-itself a “non-thought” if we want, but not because it is *self-contradictory*, like a round square, but because it, according to *its* essential

⁴⁵¹ KPM 31, my italics.

⁴⁵² KPM 32.

⁴⁵³ KPM 33.

characterization, *simply never enters as an item for consideration within fundamental ontology*, which is rather an account of the essence of *finite* subjectivity. And indeed—unlike in Kant—it plays no *systematic* role, indeed no role whatsoever, in fundamental ontology as Heidegger construes it. Heidegger introduces talk here of the entity or thing “in-itself” only in order to make the point that it is not what “transcendental philosophy” is, or ought to be, talking about, at all. Transcendental philosophy *is* interested in the “entity itself”, but only insofar as it is an item “for us”, that is, an “appearance”, which does not deny that it is something “there” after all, existing in its own right.

The transcendental circle thus makes no claims, contra Fichte, about the “mind-dependence” of entities, not even the “weaker” version of Fichte’s strong-interpretation, according to which the entity “makes no independent contribution” to its determination within cognition. On Heidegger’s version of the circle it does, because all comportment to an entity is acquiescent to it, to the entity itself which it is in its own right. So, in addition to all the affinities of Heidegger’s idealist account of subjectivity with Fichte’s, the former has the advantage of avoiding the ambiguities and, I argued, non-sequiturs regarding what Fichte thought followed from the transcendental circle regarding the mind-dependence of objects. Indeed, it is just the insistence on acquiescence and thus on the idealist account of subjectivity being an account of *finite* subjectivity which blocks in advance all those ambiguities regarding both the meaning of the circle and, as we will see, the subsequent meaning of self-sufficiency.

What does the struggle against the “thing-in-itself”, which was promulgated in German Idealism, mean, other than *the growing forgetting of what Kant fought for*: that the inner possibility and necessity of metaphysics, that is, its essence, are at bottom supported and preserved through the more original working out and increased preservation of the *problem of finitude*?⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ KPM 244, my italics.

b) “Intellectual Intuition” Revisited

Before moving on to the discussion of self-sufficiency, however, I want to discuss one further comparison between Heidegger’s and Fichte’s accounts of subjectivity. We have seen the ways in which Heidegger’s account of the essential activity of subjectivity as the self-forming of transcendence is similar to Fichte’s account of self-positing as the activity of intellectual intuition. Neither account falls foul of Kant’s *denial* of “intellectual intuition” because neither represents an immediate awareness *of a thing-in-itself*, as it did for Kant. And both describe it as a *sui generis* activity of self-constitution. But we saw how Fichte’s account of intellectual intuition is plagued with a twofold ambiguity.

Firstly, intellectual intuition seems to be playing two distinct roles for Fichte. On the one hand, intellectual intuition qua essential self-constituting activity had to be an activity that is “present in every moment of consciousness” and thus must be understood as an activity which is going on or happening anyway independently of whether or not one is *aware* of it as such. On the other hand, Fichte describes it as a *special* accomplishment of the (idealist) “philosopher”, in which the latter becomes aware of her own “sheer activity”, of her own “absolutely spontaneous self-activity”. Additionally, this seems to threaten the sense in which the philosopher’s intellectual intuition is an *immediate* awareness at all; and indeed Fichte at one point describes the philosopher’s acquaintance with it as “an *inference* from the obvious facts of consciousness”.

We could try, in the way I described in part two, to relieve the tension between these two descriptions by insisting that the philosopher’s intellectual intuition is the very same activity that happens anyway, but now performed in such a way that the activity becomes

at the same time an item of explicit awareness. This attempted resolution appeals to two different “standpoints” within which intellectual intuition can “go on” or “happen”. The difference is that in the first instance the intellectual intuition is performed within the “standpoint of life”, while in the second, the philosopher is assuming a “standpoint of speculation”. The standpoint of life is assumed by both ordinary consciousness and by the “dogmatist”, and involves a forgetting about or neglect of “my own act of thinking” and thus a forgetting about “my freedom of thinking”.

But a further problem lay in Fichte’s description of the dogmatist, as within the standpoint of ordinary thinking, as “utterly lacking in absolutely spontaneous self-activity”, which threatened to remove the essential *spontaneity* from the kind of ever-present intellectual intuition which happens anyway in all subjectivity as such. Even if this just means that the ordinary person or dogmatic philosopher is merely latently or potentially “free”, Fichte describes this situation as an “abolition of self-sufficiency”, which is transformed into “a mere illusion”. But self-sufficiency itself is supposed to be an intrinsic feature of subjectivity, which Fichte conceived of as following from the nature of the transcendental circle. If self-sufficiency is an intrinsic feature of subjectivity, then it follows that subjectivity which is defined by an intellectual intuition which happens anyway without any explicit awareness fails to be subjectivity *qua* self-constituting at all.

As may be obvious by now, there is a close affinity between Fichte’s standpoints of life and speculation and Heidegger’s conception of understanding as either inauthentic (everyday, ordinary) or authentic. These terms themselves in fact seem to be playing two roles in their own fashion. In addition to inauthentic and authentic (existentiell) *ways of*

being-a-self, which we have explored, the distinction corresponds as well to two possible *philosophical conceptions* of subjectivity itself. This is obvious in the hermeneutic method and architectonic of *Being and Time* as a whole. At the beginning of that work, Heidegger says that fundamental ontology requires that we

choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity can show itself in itself and from itself. And this means that it is to be shown as it is *proximally and for the most part* (*zunächst und zumeist*)—in its average everydayness.⁴⁵⁵

This first way of access provides the “everyday conception of subjectivity”. But then:

Our analysis of Dasein, however, is not only incomplete; it is also, in the first instance, *provisional*...It is rather a preparatory procedure [which] will have to be repeated on a higher and *authentically* ontological basis.⁴⁵⁶

It is clear that the methodological justification for starting with everydayness awaits the analysis of authenticity in Division II, in the opening section of which Heidegger says:

In starting with average everydayness, our interpretation has heretofore been confined to the analysis of such existing as is either undifferentiated or inauthentic...“Existence” means an ability-to-be [*Seinkönnen*]*—*but also one which is authentic. As long as the existential structure of an authentic ability-to-be has not been brought into the idea of existence, the fore-sight by which an existential interpretation is guided will lack primordiality...One thing has become unmistakable: *our existential analysis of Dasein up till now cannot lay claim to primordiality*.⁴⁵⁷

So the “standpoint of the fundamental ontologist” requires an “authentic view” on the structure of subjectivity, which becomes apparent only in Division II.

“Inauthentic being-a-self” corresponds to the standpoint of life in Fichte, assumed by the “dogmatist”. In such existing, one is “forgetful” of the self and absorbed in the world of everyday comportments. And there is a *sense* in which Dasein in such contexts,

⁴⁵⁵ SZ 16.

⁴⁵⁶ SZ 17, my italics.

⁴⁵⁷ SZ 232-233, Heidegger’s emphasis.

existing through being-a-they-self, is “less free”, as are those assuming Fichte’s standpoint of life. In the *Grundprobleme*, Heidegger describes such inauthentic self-understanding in the following way:

It is as though Dasein’s ability-to-be were projected *by the things*, that is, by Dasein’s dealings with them, and thus not primarily projected *by Dasein* itself out of its ownmost self, which nevertheless exists, as it is, always as dealing with things.⁴⁵⁸

As being-a-self-in-the-world, and thus as an ability-to-be, Dasein *is* its possibilities which are thrown-projected on the world; the source of Dasein’s possibilities is its understanding, which is creative but essentially sensitive to entities within the world and the opportunities they afford. In being-a-they-self, however, Dasein as it were forgets that the source of its possibilities is also its own existence as being-a-self-in-the-world and treats them as if their source were entirely the things themselves. But as I have urged, such a way of being-a-self is to be understood as an existentiell modification of Dasein’s existential structure, which is always characterized by mineness. It seems fair to call the character of mineness in inauthentic being-a-self “merely implicit”, as we did with Fichte, but that nowise threatens to undermine the fact that Dasein’s existing inauthentically still manifests the spontaneity (and receptivity of course) and self-constituting character of all existence as such. To employ another one of Heidegger’s ways of talking, inauthentic Dasein is still “choosing” itself, even if it is merely choosing to refuse to choose for itself.

Each existentiell way of being-a-self, each mode of self-understanding, represents a kind of “self-awareness”, and indeed, an “immediate” one. This self-awareness means a self-disclosure of one’s ability-to-be. “With its world, [Dasein] is *there for itself*”; and in

⁴⁵⁸ GP 410.

inauthentic existing, too, Dasein is there for itself “in such a way that it has disclosed to itself its ability-to-be in terms of the ‘world’ of its concern.”⁴⁵⁹ This self-awareness is also a type of *self-knowledge*. Through understanding, “Dasein ‘knows’ what it is capable of [*woran es mit ihm selbst ist*], inasmuch as it has either projected itself upon possibilities of its own or has been so absorbed in the they that it has *let such possibilities be presented to it by the way in which the they has publicly interpreted things*.”⁴⁶⁰

The “authentic view”, now, on the structure of subjectivity, that is, the full view which *Being and Time* as a whole is supposed to give us, in contrast to the “inauthentic view” which we receive in Division I, corresponds to one feature of Fichte’s “standpoint of speculation”. Both are, respectively, standpoints within which we are supposed to develop “proper” philosophical pictures of the structure of subjectivity. Heidegger’s “authentic view” itself—now *in contrast to* Fichte’s “standpoint of speculation”—is of course not any kind of *immediate awareness* of subjectivity and its essential self-activity, but it is not supposed to be. It is based on phenomenological reflection on the “obvious facts” of—not of *consciousness*, as Fichte would have it, but of —existing. It is *authentic-being-a-self*, as an existentiell way of existing, which corresponds to the other part of Fichte’s conception of “the philosopher’s intellectual intuition”. It involves, as it must for Fichte, the *very same* activity that inauthentic-being-a-self involves, namely “existing”, projecting of possibilities based on Dasein’s essential ability-to-be. The difference of course is just that the possibilities presenting themselves in authentic being-a-self are not *just* structurally “mine”, but my “ownmost” possibilities. “When Dasein thus brings itself back from the they, the they-self is thus modified in an existentiell

⁴⁵⁹ SZ 270.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., my italics.

manner so that it becomes authentic being-a-self.”⁴⁶¹ In authentic being-a-self, “Dasein projects itself upon its ownmost ability-to-be.”⁴⁶² The picture of the difference we resorted to with Fichte, namely of an implicit self-awareness becoming explicit, might be somewhat misleading here, but it is unmistakable that authentic-being-a-self represents its own form of self-awareness. Instead of “listening” to the they, authentic-being-a-self “*pays attention to itself*”, listens to its own “authentic self”, its “conscience”. Heidegger says Dasein is then aware of itself “in its uncanniness”.⁴⁶³ The fundamental difference between these two sets of standpoints in Fichte and Heidegger is that for Fichte the standpoint of speculation reveals the “sheer activity” and “absolute spontaneous self-activity” of subjectivity and thus its *self-sufficiency*, while for Heidegger *both* standpoints are “shot through and through” with *finitude*, both are essentially also acquiescent and thus expressive of a “transcendental neediness”.

⁴⁶¹ SZ 268.

⁴⁶² SZ 277.

⁴⁶³ Of course, that authentic-being-a-self is a kind of self-awareness is controversial, but it is just the type of interpretation which would deny this that I am resisting here, and it is the highlighting of the “idealist” aspects of Heidegger’s metaphysics of Dasein that is supposed to diagnose what is wrong with this type of interpretation and thus this denial. Dreyfus, for instance, for whom authenticity is essentially “expert coping”, appeals to Sartre in his exchange with McDowell and claims that expert coping “involves no ego”; “the ego is altogether absent”. Now if by “ego” we are supposed to understand some kind of underlying thing-substance, this is fine; but Dreyfus also takes himself to be drawing the lesson from Heidegger. Confusingly, Dreyfus seems to blur the distinction between inauthentic and authentic coping altogether by describing *both* as “fully absorbed”. But it is clear from his contrast cases—either contexts of reflective deliberation or breakdown cases which always “degrade performance”, such as his famous Knoblauch example—that the ego or “I” which finally shows up is not supposed to be thing-substance. See Dreyfus, “Response to McDowell”; Inquiry vol. 50, no. 4; Routledge 2007.

c) The Meaning of Dasein's *Selbstständigkeit*

As we saw, for Fichte the self-sufficiency of the I followed directly from the claims of the transcendental circle, thus from the sui generis self-constituting structure of subjectivity. The discussion of Fichte in part two focused on the attempt to disambiguate Fichte's claims about the meaning of the self-sufficiency which was supposed to be a consequence of these essential structural features of the I. I want to conclude now with a discussion of Heidegger's interpretation of the sense in which Dasein is, or can be, *selbständig*. This term, like "being-a-self", is rarely explicitly thematized in *Being and Time*, but it is nearly as pervasive. As such, it can seem jarring, and it isn't often clear why Heidegger is mentioning it. It seems to be in response to a question that wasn't asked. It is only within a context in which we see Heidegger engaging with the idealist conception of subjectivity that his insistence on the term makes sense.

For Fichte, the claim that reason is self-sufficient means that reason is not reliant on any resources outside of itself in order to guarantee that all of its demands are satisfiable. For Kant, though reason in its specific employments is self-legitimizing, because he ultimately fails to give a unified account of reason as a whole grounded in the unified structure of the I, finite human reason must be seen as lacking self-sufficiency precisely because it is dependent on something outside itself as a guarantee that all its demands are simultaneously satisfiable, namely a divine reason. Fichte thought that in grounding reason as a whole in the unified structure of the I, he had shown that reason itself, and thus the I, is self-sufficient. This is why for him solving the problem of the unity of reason was itself a proof of self-sufficiency. Taking the cue from Kant's characterization

of reason as self-activity, Fichte grounded the claim to self-sufficiency on the claim that “I am only active”—the self-positing I is pure activity. The strongest version of this claim, to which Fichte at times seems to be committed, is that the I is “only active” and nothing more, namely *not passive* in any apposite sense. Reason is not dependent on anything outside itself, so the appearance of any such dependence within the ordinary standpoint of life amounts to a kind of illusion. The receptivity of the I to the not-I is the result entirely of an (active) *self-ascription*. Self-sufficiency, then, is an essential *structural feature* of subjectivity, which goes hand-in-hand with the structural feature of the I’s “transcendental circularity”. He says:

Briefly stated...nothing is absolute but pure activity, and *all consciousness* and *all being* is *grounded* upon this pure activity...*nothing is purely true but my self-sufficiency*.⁴⁶⁴

Reason is absolutely self-sufficient; it exists only for itself. But nothing exists for reason except reason itself. It follows that everything reason is must have its foundation [*muss begründet sein*] within reason itself and must be explicable solely on the basis of reason itself and not on the basis of anything outside reason, for reason could not get outside of itself without renouncing itself.⁴⁶⁵

The strongest claim of self-sufficiency then is that reason—and thus the I—is *self-grounding*. For Heidegger, the main result of the interpretation of Kant, namely that the structure of transcendence is rooted in the self-forming activity of the transcendental power of imagination, means that *human* reason has been shown to be *essentially* dependent, “transcendentally needy”, and thus in need of the world and other entities with which it shares the world, in order to perform its essential functions and thus in order to be what it is.

⁴⁶⁴ SE 17; SW IV: 12.

⁴⁶⁵ IWL 59; SW I: 474.

To human finitude belongs sensibility which signifies the acquiescent intuition. As pure intuition, i.e. pure sensibility, it is a necessary element of the structure of transcendence which distinguishes finitude. Human pure reason is necessarily *a pure sensible reason*. This pure reason must be sensible in itself...Now, if the transcendental power of imagination is to be the original ground of the possibility of human subjectivity, namely precisely in its unity and wholeness, than it must make possible something like a *pure sensible reason*.⁴⁶⁶

Human reason remains *pure* because it is a priori; the forming of the *horizon* of acquiescence comes out of the self-activity of imagination itself, *in advance*, as it were, of actual acquiescence—“free from experience”. But it is also *sensible* in its essence because it is always *geared*, so to speak, in and toward acquiescence; transcendental imagination, in forming the pure *looks* of objective experience, in terms of which all comportment to the world is itself possible, remains a faculty of sensibility.⁴⁶⁷

So the characterization of human reason as a *pure sensible* reason means that reason is dispossessed of such Fichtean claims to “mastery”.

In man’s comportment toward entities that he himself is not, he already finds the entity as that from which he is supported, as that on which he has depended, over which in principle for all his culture and technology he can never become master. Dependent on the being he is not, man is at the same time basically not all-powerful [*nicht mächtig*] over the being he himself is.⁴⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the language of self-sufficiency is re-appropriated by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. Often, *but not always*, Heidegger signals this re-appropriation, and thus a change in meaning, of the idealist conception of self-sufficiency by writing a dash, as in

⁴⁶⁶ KPM 172-3, my italics.

⁴⁶⁷ Notice that this description of human reason as pure and sensible could suit Kant’s purposes just fine in the case of theoretical reason. The latter, in all its employments, is always geared toward sensible experience. All objective knowledge requires sensible content. It is in the case of practical reason that this characterization seems threatening. And it is this threat which causes Heidegger to famously claim that Kant “shrank-back” from the imagination or retreated from the prominent position he had assigned to it in the first edition, in order to “preserve the mastery of reason”, particularly in the practical sphere. Remember as well that it is precisely the “inadequacy” of Kant’s defense of practical reason that so troubled Fichte.

⁴⁶⁸ KPM 228.

Selbst-ständigkeit, or by splitting up the constituent words, as in *die Ständigkeit des Selbst*. The meanings of *Ständig* and *Ständigkeit* will have temporal connotations—persistence, continuousness, permanence—and this justifies the usual translations as “constant” and “constancy”. The re-appropriation is based on the discovered temporality of Dasein’s existence and of care. And Heidegger’s usage is primarily aimed at a replacement of the traditional conception of identity and persistence grounded in the *subjectum* as underlying substance. Because of ontological asymmetry, such identity and persistence must be conceived rather in terms of the temporality of the structure of existence. But the legacy of the idealist usage of this word echoes in it, or so I want to suggest, and traces of it remain here. But in what sense? Heidegger says:

The ontological structure of the entity that in each case I myself am centers *in the self-sufficiency* [*Selbstständigkeit*] of existence...now that selfhood has been explicitly taken back into the structure of care, and therefore of temporality, the temporal interpretation of self-constancy [*Selbst-ständigkeit*] and non-self-constancy [*Unselbst-ständigkeit*] *acquires an importance of its own*.⁴⁶⁹

Fichte had wanted to see *Selbstständigkeit* as a structural feature of subjectivity, in the sense that it meant that subjectivity is factically independent of anything outside of it. As Heidegger suggests here, it remains a structural feature of *existence*, but only in a *formal* existential sense. That existence, the structure of being-a-self, is characterized by *Selbstständigkeit* means that there are two existentiell possibilities or ways of being-a-self afforded to Dasein, *Selbst-ständigkeit* and *Unselbst-ständigkeit*. These correspond in turn to authentic and the inauthentic existentiell possibilities.

⁴⁶⁹ KPM 332, my italics. *NB.* There is no dash here, which I take to justify my keeping the translation here as “self-sufficiency”. Heidegger also uses the word untampered with at 1) SZ 303, but this time in quotation marks: “Sein ‘Bestand’ gründet nicht in der Substantialität einer Substanz, sondern in der ‘Selbstständigkeit’ des existierenden Selbst, dessen Sein als Sorge begriffen wurde”; and at 2) SZ 375, now with no quotation marks: “Die Selbstständigkeit ist eine Seinsweise des Daseins und gründet deshalb in einer spezifischen Zeitigung der Zeitlichkeit.” Though for reasons that will be clear in a moment, it seems to me that Heidegger should be saying *Selbst-ständigkeit* here.

The *Ständigkeit des Selbst* as the supposed persistence [*Beharrlichkeit*] of the subjectum receives its clarification in terms of care. The phenomenon of authentic ability-to-be also opens our eyes for the *Ständigkeit des Selbst* in the sense of having-won-a-standing [*Standgewonnenhaben*]. The *Ständigkeit des Selbst* in the double sense of continuing steadfastness is the authentic counter-possibility to the *Unselbst-ständigkeit* of irresolute falling. Existentially, *Selbst-ständigkeit* signifies nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness. The ontological structure of such anticipatory resoluteness reveals the existentiality of the self's selfhood.⁴⁷⁰

The self-sufficiency of Dasein is not a “constant” feature of all of Dasein's existence, but rather a kind of special feature, or accomplishment, of anticipatory resoluteness—of authentic being-a-self. It is “a way of being of Dasein, and is therefore grounded in a *specific* temporalizing of temporality”⁴⁷¹, namely authentic temporalizing. But because Dasein's essential temporalizing [*Zeitigung*] means not just a forming of original time and the “in-time-ness” of its existence, but the way in which Dasein *constitutes* itself, or gives rise to itself, authentic *Selbst-ständigkeit* cannot just represent “self-constancy” in the sense of remaining itself or enduring through time, as if inauthentic Dasein didn't persist as itself through time as well. *Selbst-ständigkeit* and *Unselbst-ständigkeit* rather represent also two different ways in which Dasein can *constitute* its own existence. And the *Selbst-ständigkeit* of authentic existence means that in constituting itself in this way, one is “able to stand on one's own feet”, as we say, or “stand by oneself”, and “make up one's own mind”. Fichte writes:

Anyone who is conscious of his own self-sufficiency and independence from everything outside of himself—a consciousness that can be obtained only by making something of oneself on one's own and independently of everything else—will not require things in order to support his self, nor can he employ them for this purpose, for they abolish his self-sufficiency and transform it into a mere illusion.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ SZ 322.

⁴⁷¹ SZ 375; my italics.

⁴⁷² IWL 18-19; SW I: 433.

Fichte's mistake from the Heideggerian perspective is the thought that "self-sufficiency"—precisely in the sense of "being able to support oneself" and "being able to make something of oneself on one's own"—*requires* independence from "everything outside of oneself". Nevertheless I want to suggest that it is precisely the meaning of these former designations which Heidegger wants to maintain in some form, that is, to *transform*. As being-in-the-world, Dasein's understanding—of itself, of others and of the world—is always a thrown projecting; and so Dasein depends on the world, on others, to be what it is, even when it is authentically being itself. But in the possibility of so existing, which also belongs to it essentially, Dasein *is* able to hold onto, support, and maintain an existence which is "most its own". This does not mean that we are "masters" of our own being anymore than we are masters over others or over nature; *what it means is that we are not "things"*. And this is the core of the idealist answer to Kant's question "what is the human being?" which I have been tracing: an urging that we keep this, above all else, "steadfastly" in mind, whenever we question, out of wonder or bewilderment, in hopefulness or anxiety, about the being each of us is, about what or who we are and what or who we can become.

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